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ISSUE 87

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Speed boosting tricks that will make your site download in seconds p28

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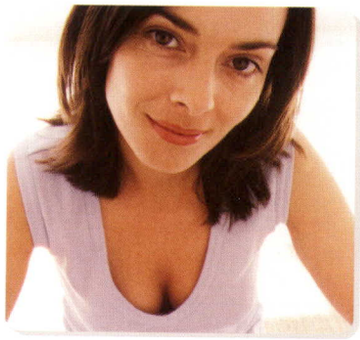

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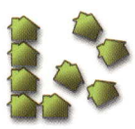

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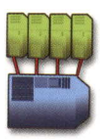

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ISSN 1741-9131

PPA ABC AUDIT BUREAU OF CIRCULATIONS
13,265 July-December 2002

WELCOME

SOUND AND VISION

What's the best thing about the broadband revolution? Many people would point to the increase of file sharing, and the ability for Web users to get what they want when they want it. For me, though, it has to be the steps that broadband has helped us take to eliminate the World Wide Wait. Before, people had to wait minutes for even the most basic of sites to load up, but broadband has finally dragged the Web back to where it should be – in the here and now.

Sure, this means you can deliver your site to visitors far more quickly than ever before, but it also means you can now realistically include the kind of site content that would previously have been unthinkable. Primarily, we're talking about huge multimedia files – whether you want to set up streaming or downloadable content, it's going to appear a hell of a lot quicker than before. Although streaming was originally set up to allow modem users to access monster movies and audio without waiting on them downloading, it's coming into its own now as people suddenly have the bandwidth to see and hear things that are more than just a jerky, muffled mess.

This is why we're focusing our attention on the world of multimedia streaming this month. Even if you've never pondered the subject before, you can make a massive difference to your design knowledge and leapfrog rival designers by getting a thorough grounding in this technology. This is where we step in...

Thomas Watson, Editor
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THE PRACTICAL INTERNET WEB DESIGNER PROMISE

Design focus
Practical Internet Web Designer is the only monthly UK magazine devoted solely to helping you improve your site-building skills. Every month, we focus on the key programs that Web designers of all experience and expertise use: Dreamweaver, Photoshop and Flash. Unlike other titles, we don't shy away from developer issues either, with a section dedicated to hand coding.

Expert help
Each issue of *Practical Internet Web Designer* comes packed with detailed tutorials and indispensable tips and tricks. A dedicated helpdesk section features a team of hand-picked experts to answer your Web design queries. What's more, every article in the magazine is written by an expert in the relevant field.

Practical advice
We are committed to bringing you results, so any tutorial you follow will yield impressive returns that you can use on your own site. To make things easier, the cover disc contains files for you to get started on every tutorial within the magazine.

COVER ART: SIMON DANAHER

This month's cover artwork was created by Simon Danaher. His remit was to create an image that would signify the speed and power of multimedia on the Web, with the monitor idea a central theme. The streams of code flowing from the screen were the last things to be added to the image.

YOUR GUIDE TO THIS ISSUE...

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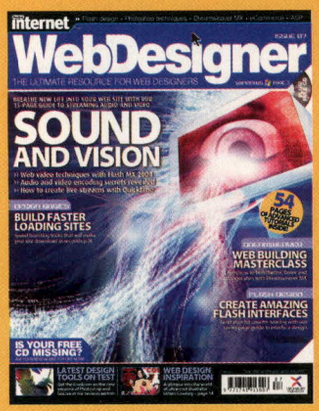
THE COVER



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SEE PAGE 140 FOR FULL DETAILS

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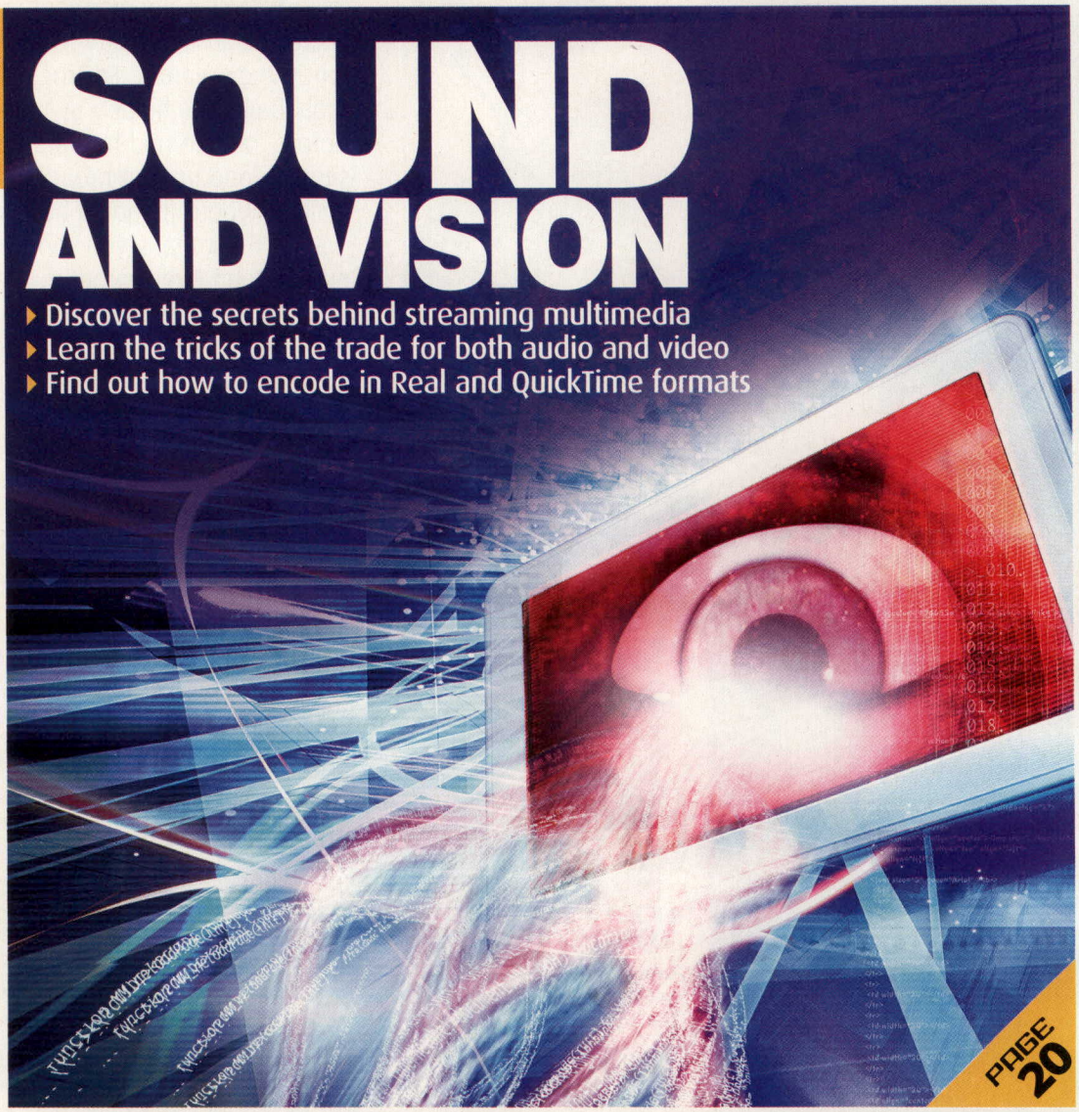
SOUND AND VISION

- Discover the secrets behind streaming multimedia
- Learn the tricks of the trade for both audio and video
- Find out how to encode in Real and QuickTime formats



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BUILD FASTER-LOADING SITES

- Compress complicated sites into small-fry Web pages
- Make your site accessible to everyone
- Learn how to design more efficiently

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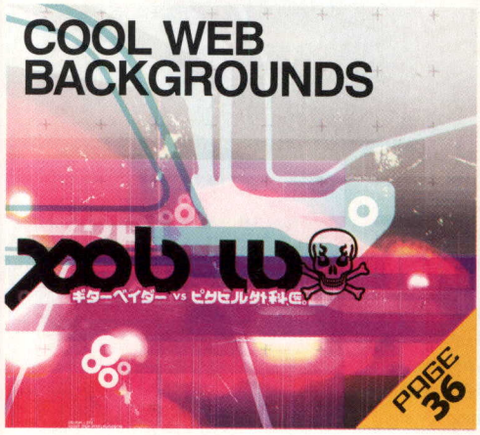
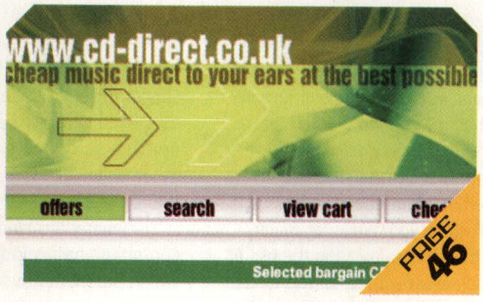
COOL WEB BACKGROUNDS



DREAMWEAVER WEB TEMPLATES

Create impressive sites easily with our guide



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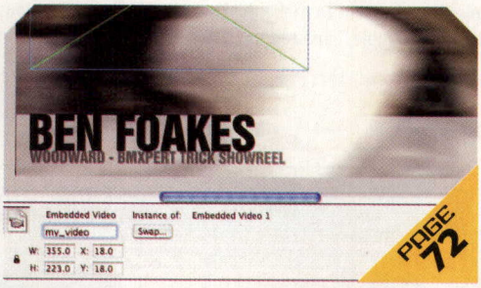

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TECH SUPPORT

Solve your design problems in our six pages of in-depth questions and answers brought to you by leading experts in Flash, Dreamweaver, Photoshop and Web Development

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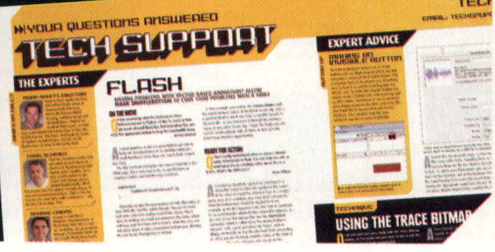

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YOUR ESSENTIAL ROUND-UP OF THE LATEST EVENTS IN THE WORLD OF WEB DESIGN, GRAPHICS CREATION AND SITE DEVELOPMENT

ACTIVEH CHANGES

IE UPDATE TO CRIPPLE PAGE PLUG-INS

Developers told to change their Web sites before January – or face a barrage of frustrated visitors

A huge number Web sites will now have to be redesigned after changes to the way Internet Explorer handles the ActiveX component. This revelation comes after recent court action filed by Eolas Technologies, Microsoft has teamed up with a bevy of key industry parties to alter the world's most successful and popular browser.

A judgment in August found the browser in breach of a patent covering a particular method used by authors to embed and automatically initiate certain programs. Eolas was awarded $521m (£307m), with Microsoft left refuting the charge and plotting a pending appeal.

Since then, a number of the Web's most potent forces such as RealNetworks, Apple and Macromedia have been involved in enforced amendments to IE.

"This ruling affects more than just Microsoft; it affects a broad array of partners and customers, including companies that many would view as competitors," explained Microsoft's Michael Wallent.

To address the problem, the 'SP1b' version of the browser is expected to be circulated by the New Year and will deal with particular ActiveX controls differently.

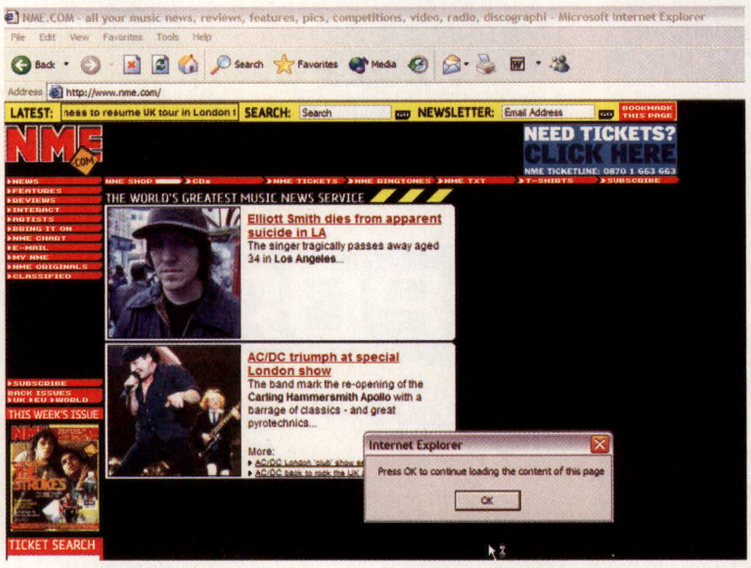
Web authors have been warned that unless their pages use dynamically scripted controls or those that don't reference remote data, they will be required to take action. While for many this simply means manipulating the use of the PARAM element within controls loaded with APPLET, EMBED or OBJECT tags, it could mean much work for larger sites.

However, both Microsoft and Macromedia insist their priorities side with the user, offering test releases of the new IE and full technical advice online.

"For developers, we want to make this change as easy as possible," insisted Macromedia's Senior Vice President of Product Design, Mike Sundermeyer. "We believe that most Web sites will be updated by the time the new version of Internet Explorer becomes widely used, so for most Web users, this change should be transparent."

Elsewhere, the World Wide Web Consortium has considered its position within the matter by forming a patent advisory group. It intends to conduct a public investigation to examine what repercussions these kinds of legal suits could have on the very markup language that underpins the Internet. Depending on findings, it could prompt the organisation to recommend various changes to the HTML standard. ■

■ Plotting an appeal: Microsoft is refuting the charge made against it in August



■ Internet Explorer was found to be in breach of a patent covering a method used by authors to embed and initiate programs, and is undergoing enforced amendments

■ Macromedia has helped out in the change to the ActiveX component

DID YOU KNOW?

5 THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT... ACTIVEH

1. In 1996 Microsoft rebranded its Object Linking and Embedding (OLE) and Component Object Model (COM) technologies as ActiveX.
2. ActiveX consists of downloadable programs that let browsers host files with editing tools and functions intact.
3. ActiveX is not a language but a set of rules for sharing info, so developers can create controls with Java, C, C++ and Visual Basic.
4. ActiveX controls differ from Java applets by having full access to Windows, so must be authenticated before downloading.
5. Apple and IBM sponsored ActiveX's main rival OpenDoc for years before both parties officially declared the technology redundant.

GOT A NEWS STORY?

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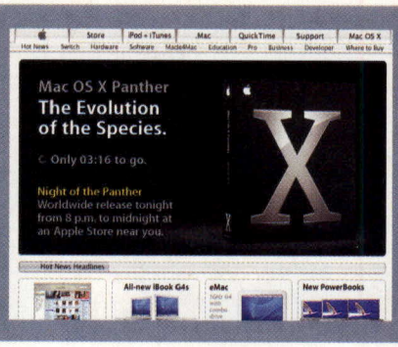


NEWS SHORT

BIG MAC BASH

This year's MacFair, Southern California's largest annual event of its kind, is to be held at Cerritos College, Norwalk. Besides featuring in excess of 30 major industry exhibitors such as Microsoft, Movieworks and SmartSound, it provides practical workshops in Dreamweaver and Flash as well as Final Cut Pro. Adobe is also a highlight of the 24-strong seminar groups, with audiences gaining an insight into updates within the Creative Suite and DVD Studio Pro ranges. ■

NEW CAMERA

Olympus C-5000 Zoom

Photography giant unleashes a stunning performer at a price that's not to be sniffed at

Following hot on the heels of its C-4000 Zoom digital camera, Olympus has launched the new five-million pixel model.

The C-5000 Zoom features an impressive 3x optical zoom lens and a stack of photographic functions, all for a price of £399 including VAT. Aside from a full automatic mode, the camera includes a total of six built-in programs that optimise performance under portrait and night conditions. The more demanding photographer can also take advantage of such benefits as an adjustable focus, improved white balance facilities and ISO settings. What's more, a special integrated macro mode is capable of filming the smallest of subjects and capturing great images at a distance of just four centimetres. Conversely, a selection of shooting modes gives users the chance to record sporting sequences and fast-paced action.

Scenes can be enlarged with the standard optical zoom, which can then be combined with the 4x digital option to achieve 12x magnification. This makes the camera ideal for a range of applications, including studies of vast landscapes or intimate portraits.

There is the ability to add external flash units, although the supplied illumination already offers superb performance in bad light. Your results can in fact be easily previewed via a single-click button that sends output straight to the handy LCD screen.

The nicely designed unit also houses a clutch of effects such as panorama and image merging, plus colour filters like black and white or sepia. ■

■ The C-5000 has plenty of bells and whistles for demanding photographers

MARTIAL ARTS DVD LAUNCH

EgoVision goes viral

High-kicking martial arts flick commands dynamic online marketing strategy to promote limited edition DVD release

Hong Kong cinema's *Naked Weapon* has gone head-to-head in its bid to compete with mainstream releases by staging an exciting viral campaign for its DVD launch.

Part of a movie genre famed for its 'babes, blades 'n' bullets', the production stars Maggie Q as one of three assassins and is a rare Hong Kong film shot in English. As such, its marketing agency Medusa opted to enlist the talents of multimedia specialists EgoVision to promote the two-disc edition online.

Centred on a microsite that contains a story synopsis, biographies and downloadable elements, it represents a lengthy campaign that has been carefully staged over many months.

"The first competition and microsite launched on 29 August 2003, introducing entrants to the movie, its stars and the great special effects," EgoVision's Interactive Director John Lyons explained. "It was designed to revolve around the movie trailer, so that entrants became familiar with the culture of the Web site and brand."

This includes the introduction of a 'Naked Combat' fighting game that visitors can play to win prizes, providing a key aspect to the success of the project.

"The Naked Weapon microsite will be the perfect medium to push the competitions and viral activity that will tie into offline advertising and promotions in film and men's lifestyle magazines, national and local radio, tabloid and national newspapers," added Medusa's Marketing Manager Debbie Rowland. "The promotion targets movie fans and gamers aged 18-35, who are mostly men, and other special activity caters for women aged 18-24." ■

■ *Naked Weapon* is part of the 'babes, blades 'n' bullets' movie genre

SOURCES OF INSPIRATION

Where to find the best Web design help and advice online

DESKTOP IMAGE
www.desktopimage.com
Not only is this site a superb source of high resolution wallpapers from a range of graphic designers, but its own charm is undeniable. Using Flash to produce an animated menu that is both usable and stylish, the work on display here is certainly inspiring.

HYPER OGGA
www.hyperogga.com
This neatly produced and award-winning site profiles the creative efforts of graphic artist Matthew Taylor. All of his pieces, including cartoons, sketches, Flash art and wallpapers can be viewed or downloaded, while a biography lets you know about the man.

COMPUTER GRAFICA
www.computer-grafica.com
Although the content on this site is written in Italian it remains highly accessible, offering a substantial collection of breathtaking 2D illustrations and wallpapers. The Flash gallery is also impressive, with a range of provocative multimedia animations available.

DESIGNGRAPHIK
www.designgraphik.com
This site may not be much to look at because it's essentially a list, but the work it contains is stunning. Each is a sample of static imagery or short animation and provides a great idea of what those in the digital arts are currently up to.

NEWS SHORT

NOT-SO-SECURE SERVER

Multiple vulnerabilities discovered in OpenSSL have prompted those responsible to release new versions. The OpenSSL project has updated the implementations of both Secure Socket Layer and Transport Layer Security protocols to stem panic on flaws dubbed 'highly critical' by independent reports. It was feared that hackers could maliciously exploit the loopholes to crash the network or even gain illegitimate system access. ■

NEWS SHORT

NEW PORTAL OF CALL

Software solutions company Emojo has launched Affino LX, the latest version of its successful Portal Management and Communication System. Managing Director Markus Karlsson headed a party staged at London's Royal Opera House for the event that celebrates two years of product development and testing. Existing customers such as Diesel, MasterCard and the US Government can now look forward to an improved interface, more modules, site searching enhancements and better platform support. ■

PAYPAL

PayPal crosses the pond

British-based Web traders enjoy dedicated secure services from the leading online payment provider

The popular PayPal service, which allows more than 31 million global members to safely buy and sell online, has launched a site designed exclusively for UK users.

It follows the announcement in September that the company had established its European headquarters in Ireland, with long-term plans to extend support across the continent.

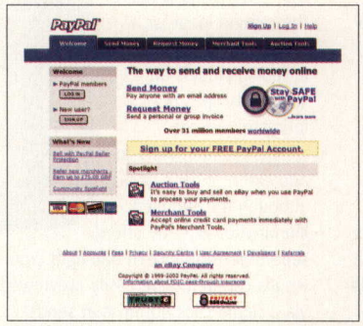
"PayPal is already being used by a large number of people in the UK to buy and sell locally, regionally and across borders around the world," explained PayPal's General Manager Matt Bannick.

One of the key benefits that UK residents will now have is a unique Seller Protection scheme that offers protection against fraudulent charges. The facility, which is known to be one of the few existing in the industry, requires the seller to follow guidelines such as account verification and the recording of shipping to qualify. "With the new customised features and Seller Protection program on the site, we are bringing additional convenience and security to our UK customers," said Bannick.

Another welcome addition is the reduction or scrapping of withdrawal fees that were previously attached to the service. Those making withdrawals of under £50 to a bank in this country will find a 50 percent cut in charge, and tariffs above this are quashed completely.

The UK site becomes the eBay-owned company's first truly international domain since starting in 1998, and is currently available to 38 countries worldwide. ■

■ The PayPal logo is a familiar sight to 31 million people across the globe



■ PayPal is already used by a large number of people in the UK to buy and sell online

BBC ARCHIVE LAUNCH

Auntie's archives

The Beeb announces initiatives to deliver an unprecedented archive of TV and radio programmes to bandwidth-rich Web users

If you've ever looked at your telly and wondered where exactly your licence fee is spent, you may be surprised to learn that one of the BBC's biggest projects is only just about to see the light of day.

Director General Greg Dyke has for some time been heralding a 'treasure trove' archive that will allow viewers who have broadband access the chance to watch broadcasts at will.

Programmes could range from some of the station's earliest known examples to more current offerings, giving the public more power over their schedules.

Technological pilots have already been presented at the recent IBC broadcast conference in Amsterdam, which have also suggested a number of intriguing features. A new bespoke media player could provide visitors with the ability to receive programmes such as the news at irregular times, while allowing shows to be stored.

■ The BBC is about to dust off its treasure trove of archives for your entertainment

"The project is in its early stages but for us it's a very exciting idea," revealed BBC New Media Chief Ashley Highfield. "How it will work and how we deal rights issues, technical issues and aspects such as digitisation, is up to the pilot."

At present, the corporation intends to bypass the logistical and costly problems of housing the archive centrally by employing a form of legitimate P2P file sharing.

However, it remains unclear how the BBC will make its earliest and lost programmes available or obtain permissions where necessary. Similarly, how it deals with charging those who don't pay a licence fee is important, along with the loss in revenue from DVD or video sales.

"We are under no illusion that this isn't a challenge," confirms Highfield. ■

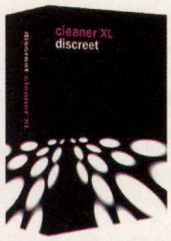
PRODUCTS

New hardware and software to boost your design creativity

RICOH MP 5240A SK DRIVE

www.ricoh.co.uk

Although not strictly a brand new product, Ricoh has just announced a revamped budget price of £99.99 for its popular DVD writer. The rapid 4x speed DVD +R and +RW unit can get through 4.7Gb of storage in less than twelve minutes – and the discs created are promised to provide excellent compatibility across a whole range of domestic players and drives. It also comes with a whole stack of software to let you burn your discs effectively, so there's no excuse for backing up those DV movie clips ever again.



DISCREET CLEANER XL

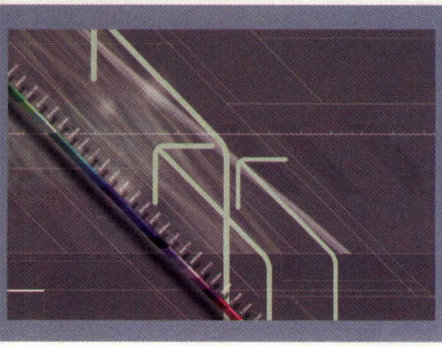
www.discreet.com

If you fancy broadening your horizons after reading this month's cover feature, then Discreet might have the answer for you. Designed to allow developers to create streaming Web video quickly and easily, Cleaner XL's powerful encoding features allow you to produce content for a range of platforms and applications. Support for Windows Media 9 and even mobile phone formats are included, while Hyper-Threading Technology ensures rapid processing. The package is available now for £511.

TRUST 960 POWERCAM

www.trust.com

Even a year ago, 3 megapixels would have set you back a few hundred pounds. Not any more. This compact and tidy digital camera combines a cool 3.1 megapixel CCD sensor with a 4x digital zoom and built-in flash. This ensures optimum performance in even the darkest conditions, while a colour 4cm TFT screen lets you profile your shots and video clips. You'll also find an on-board dictaphone and a Digital Print Order Format to let you print without touching a PC. The camera is available now for an excellent £139.99 including VAT.



NEWS SHORT

ONLINE ADVERTISING BOOM

A study by Nielsen and NetRatings has revealed that marketing investment in online advertising continues to rise. Based largely on the financial and telecom services, ad spending levels rose an additional $100m (£59m) from last year's first quarter. It accounts for just over half of the $175m (£103m) total increase in advertising expenditure, quoted for the same period by the Interactive Advertising Bureau. Analysts estimate that figures could rise by a further 15 percent in the coming year. ■

Helly Hansen sees sense

Designer clothes retailer enlists award-winning team to design its latest online catalogue

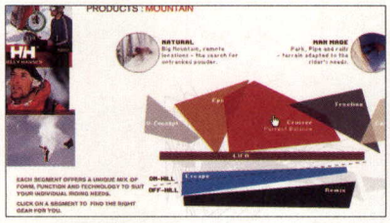
The clothing label Helly Hansen, one of the leading manufacturers of extreme sports apparel worldwide, has launched a totally new site for its latest collection.

Highly acclaimed design agency Sense Internet was drafted in for the project which hopes to market the brand's autumn and winter catalogue effectively among its online demographic.

With a target audience of young, trendy buyers who also enjoy outdoor pursuits, the company believes that the investment in new media technology will inspire lasting credibility. It also hopes that dynamic content such as stylish Flash animations, funky audio, action-packed video and interactive elements will help share a 'free-ride' attitude with visitors.

"Helly Hansen recognises that its audience wants more from a Web site than just the product information," explained Sense Internet's Account Manager Emma Wensley. "They want to interact with the site, and see proof that the brand understands their motivation for taking part in the sports. The new site gives them exactly that, and will help Helly Hansen move ahead in the marketplace."

The collaboration adds to Sense's already impressive reputation for producing outstanding online solutions since forming in 1995. A consistent winner of numerous 'best Internet' and 'e-business' awards, its work with top UK companies includes commissions for British Airways, Rizla and Mars. ■



■ Helly Hansen recruited acclaimed design agency Sense to give its new site pulling power

WINNERS AT THE WEB AWARDS

Alienation awarded

Web consultancy firm crowned as one of Scotland's premier e-companies

Having previously been nominated as finalists on two occasions, Alienation Design has claimed the regional title at this year's Winners at the Web awards.

The Glasgow-based outfit, whose services include development, content management and online marketing solutions, has gone from strength to strength since forming in 1997.

Over the past few years the team has seen its impressive portfolio of clients extend across the UK and Europe, featuring commissions for Bell Group Ltd and Bank of Scotland.

"We are delighted to have received a W@W award, which is one of the top e-business awards in Scotland," explained Managing and Creative Director Neil Barr. "It is tremendous recognition for the work we have been doing over the past six years."

Currently also in its sixth year, the awards are jointly organised by both the Scottish and Highlands and Islands Enterprises to celebrate the country's top Internet organisations.

A record number of entrants was considered for the 2003 event, with over 540 hopefuls going head-to-head in 12 different categories.

Alienation's use of Web technologies made it a worthy recipient of the £1,000 prize. As Sarah Deas of Targeting Innovation explained: "The company has helped businesses expand by ensuring they understand the benefits of employing a sound e-business strategy. I wish Alienation Design every success in the future." ■

■ Alienation Design was thrilled to win the regional title at this year's Winners at the Web Awards

EVENTS DIARY

MacFair 2003,
14-16 November,
Norwalk, California
Industry exhibitors showcase developments, while Mac-themed seminars and workshops provide professional training

COMDEX 2003,
16-20 November,
Las Vegas, Nevada
Keynote speakers address key issues in eCommerce technologies and debate how trends in wireless and Web services affect business

European Conf of Minerva,
20-21 November,
Parma, Italy
Numerous speakers and workshops cover Web usability and quality control of cultural sites

Mac Expo,
20-22 November,
Islington, London
Free seminars, masterclasses and keynotés show users the power of the Mac; new technologies showcased

'Making Historical Content Available on the Web',
1 December, London
Workshop presenting content now offered online, along with basic concepts for digitising these resources

XML Conf & Expo 2003,
7-12 December,
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Business and government sectors come together to discuss emerging developments and services within the XML community

Internet World Fall 2003,
8-11 December, New York
Brings together managers/ developers seeking industry custom or press coverage

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PRACTICAL? I DON'T THINK SO...

I've been buying *Practical Internet* on and off for about 18 months, and considered it one of the better Internet magazines out there. I was very disappointed when I went into my local shop to find that you'd not only changed the content of the magazine, but the name as well. I bought it, thinking that I'd find lots of the old stuff inside when I got it home. Alas, it's all filled with Web design. I'm sure I'm not the only reader of *Practical Internet* who isn't interested in Web Design, and who bought the magazine for the informative features on viruses and searching. I think it's a pity – the new issue looks great, but it just doesn't do what I thought it was going to. Where am I supposed to turn for my monthly dose of Internet news and help?

Bill Russell

Thanks for your feedback, Bill. We knew that rebranding *Practical Internet* as *PI Web Designer* might not appeal to everyone, but after a long and hard process, we decided that Web design would allow us to create a much more aspirational magazine. We hope that most of our loyal readers will still find enough to keep them interested in the new title – our intention is to provide a complete resource for anyone interested in Web design. If no amount of high-end Web design help will convince you, may we suggest you take a look at the recently-revamped *Internet Made Easy* for your browsing reading fix.

NO COLOURS OF THE SPECTRUM

Really like the new magazine – I particularly liked the advice on Illustrator, something you don't really get often enough in Internet titles. The thing that I found really off-putting, though, was the Web colour feature. Don't get me wrong, your writer did a good job and gave me some excellent advice on using colour on the Web. My main gripe was with the colours used – you've done a feature on Web colours, then used grey throughout the piece. I felt this was a missed opportunity, and that people would be much more inclined to read it if it was colourful, like the name says. Apart from that, I like what you're doing!

Sam Allen

Cheers for the support there, Sam. As far as the feature is concerned, our design team went for a subtle look to contrast with the colours spoken about in the piece – we really liked it. We're especially chuffed that you liked the writing, as we only discovered after we went to press that Danny McAleer, who wrote the piece, is actually colour blind!

BREAKING THE CODE

I found your magazine by accident on the shelves of my WH Smith, and I've got to say that I like it. I've been after a Web design-based magazine for a while now, so yours fits the bill. You seem to have struck a good balance between advice, information and eye candy. I followed most of the tutorials (didn't touch the eCommerce stuff, though), but I've got to admit that my favourite section of the mag is the Gallery. I know it's just pictures, but I really loved the Web sites you featured. I went on Varan's Home, and spent ages marvelling at a completely different navigation system. Maybe you'll show us how to create something like this in the future!

David Johnston

We agree with you on this one, David. We spent many hours finding the most amazing sites and images we could, and we think we've uncovered some quality designers. We were fond of the Days in a Day Web site as well, although we did find ourselves spending far too long being amazed at how good Varan's Home is. And who knows, we might help you create something like that one day...

LETTER OF THE MONTH

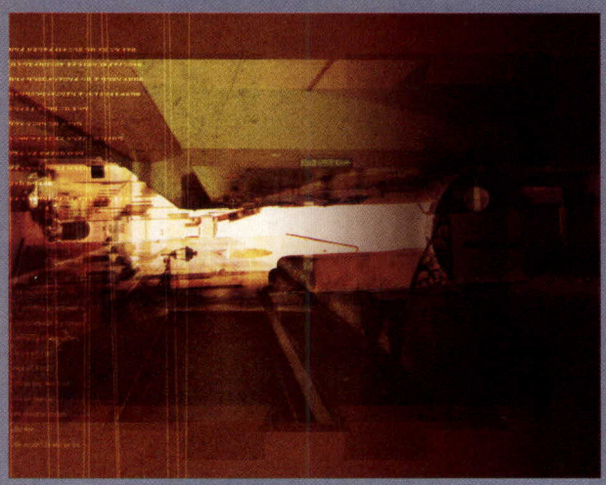
PRACTICAL INTERNET WEB DESIGNER SUBSCRIPTION WINNER

THE INSIDE STORY

First of all, I'd like to congratulate you on a great new issue of your magazine. I've been designing Web sites (as an interested amateur, of course) for years now, and always found that there wasn't enough Web-building advice in the old *Practical Internet*. Your new *Web Designer* title is just what I was after – it's good to see a magazine devoted to Web design after all this time.

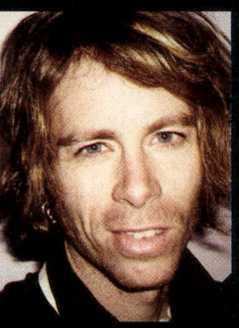
The thing I liked most about Issue 86 was the Photoshop feature starting on page 34. As someone who knows a little about Photoshop, I've studied many professional images and wondered how it was all done many times before. To see how an artist like the one you used built something that looked really professional was just what the doctor ordered! I didn't think there was any way I could recreate it following your steps, but I managed to achieve something pretty decent. Thanks for that!

Lewis Bellamy



Thanks for your praise, Lewis. Your points about the magazine are greatly appreciated, and we agree with you on the Photoshop issue. We'd seen Paul Sinclair's work before, and couldn't really figure out how he created such great artwork. We could hardly believe the image he created for us was done with photographs of an alleyway, an airport and an archway! It just goes to show that a little bit of imagination can go a long way in every walk of life.

Urban Cowboy

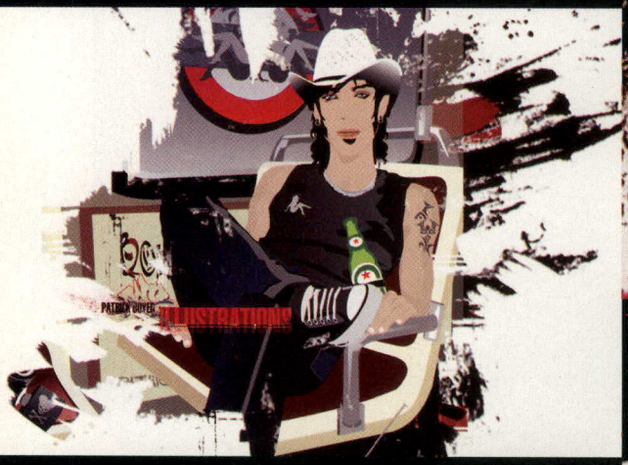


Sleek and sexy illustrations rule the day at UrbanCowboy. We spoke to Patrick Boyer about the design firm he created

PIWD: How did UrbanCowboy come about?
UC: Well the name came from an authentic cowboy hat worn by a real Mexican cowboy. Once I claimed ownership, it became an important accessory to the nightlife and various photo shoots with close friends. A few weeks before I moved to New York, I needed a new identity for my independent design company and well, the name kind of popped up and stuck. So UrbanCowboy was originally a brand I developed for my freelance services to start off a new (yet short) life in America.

PIWD: Tell us a little about your Web design career
UC: Well I did get a degree in Communication... I'm not sure how often it comes into effect, mind you. The Web design explosion for me came a few years after, from wanting to create a nifty site for my late night radio show. Then I discovered Flash! Since then it's been freelance gigs, startups, corporate 9-5 and eventually the start and relaunch of urbancowboy.net. Ah, and bliss (more or less) ever since.

PIWD: What are the major aims of UrbanCowboy?
UC: Could I say world domination and still be respected? Ha, no, but the aim is always shifting and adapting to



■ Patrick Boyer's illustrations mix cartoon elements with counter-culture references to great effect

what I want out of life, my dreams and occupational goals. I once claimed UC as 'a mad love affair between doing what brings me the most pleasure in life and trying to make an honest living out of it'. That still rings true today, so I guess UrbanCowboy's aim is to fulfil my dreams in the area of creativity, to keep me challenged and to create striking design that makes me, my clients and others happy.

PIWD: What software do you use to create your illustrations?
UC: Do I dare say and give up the family secrets? It's not Illustrator, but Corel Draw. It's then imported in either Photoshop or Flash, depending if it's to be animated or set up for print.

PIWD: Describe the creation process behind building an illustration or a Web site
UC: Catching that buzz... not in terms of substances, but the direction my client and I want the design to go. From music, magazines, a social life, fashion... to napkins at sushi restaurants. I have an allotted time period to gather as much 'stimulating' material from various media (including coffee and Black Russians). Then from the various gathered media, the physical creation begins. Then, I switch to creation mode.

PIWD: Which particular project has given you the most satisfaction?
UC: Each project has brought something new and exciting to the table, but to single out a particular favourite, I would have to highlight the illustrations for **www.ooshka.com**. Really saucy imagery that hints at deviant and sexually liberated lifestyles. I think it was Ooshka that gave me the push to create more vivid illustrations. A few of these images were later published in other media, including Peace Signs, a full colour publication featuring artwork against the war(s) on Iraq.

PIWD: You have a very distinctive style. How did this evolve?
UC: I guess my style has and always will evolve from being really passionate about all types of design and being directly involved in the lifestyle that I wish to design for. It's very important to keep this passion and not stop adapting and learning new styles and techniques. I'm very appreciative of others and how often other talented individuals can create things so mind-blowing; it makes you that much more receptive as an artist. There is still so much out there to learn... its all-very exciting.

■ The diversity of sources and inspiration in UrbanCowboy's work can be seen in images like this one

PIWD: Where do you get your inspiration from?
UC: Wow, lots. Music has to be on while I design, that is a must. Cross media material will often help to inspire me as well, (ie magazine layouts and adverts to help inspire Web and vice versa). Often walks, and not only for the fresh air and break from the monitor, but walking and being receptive to stimulation. I love living in the heart of a cultural city. Often inspirations are right outside your doorstep. If I feel creatively blocked, I often grab a coffee-to-go and walk around the city, (now Montreal). I return with a caffeine kick, new material in hand and fully energised. Oh, and if it's late enough, a good spin on the dance floor is a surefire remedy as well.

PIWD: Describe UrbanCowboy in five words
UC: Imaginative, savvy, intelligent, stimulating and pleasurable.

PIWD: What excites you more – the new version of Flash or the new version of Illustrator?
UC: Even though I do prefer illustrations, Flash did change my entire outlook on design, and had a huge role in me becoming a designer. Flash is a true multimedia program where I can incorporate all sorts of sounds, video, graphics and illustrations. So let's see what them wacky Macromedia guys come up with next.

PIWD: What are you working on at the moment?
UC: I'm currently developing the new image for Blend of America, the clothing company. I've recently entered the fashion world with a few co-workers and I must admit it does float my boat. I am also developing a cute animated ninja character for the branding of an up-and-coming sushi chain in Canada. I love sushi, so this is a giant playground for me to develop a fun and fully interactive character. Then I'm working with Carole Guevin from Netdiver.net, developing an interactive manifesto on the spectrum of new media convergence. She has also been a great mentor, and is a crazy character to boot.

PIWD: What does the future hold for UrbanCowboy?
UC: I think in the near future I will put a lot more emphasis on the creation of custom illustrations and animations through **www.patrickboyerillustrations.com**. It's an area I would love to develop, to help promote products and lifestyles through my illustrations. I also see maybe some street wear on the horizon. I've often thought of doing some funky shirts with some of my characters and possibly selling them online. Part of the fun is you never know which direction life will steer you in. The best thing to do is be open-minded and go with the flow, learn and have a grand old time while doing it. Yehaa!
<END>

You can find out more about UrbanCowboy by visiting **www.urbancowboy.net**. ■

MINISTRY OF

TO ITS LEGIONS OF PARISHIONERS WORLDWIDE, MINISTRY OF SOUND IS PERHAPS THE MOST DYNAMIC CLUBBING BRAND THERE IS. **MARK BILLEN** DISCOVERS HOW THESE 24-HOUR PARTY PEOPLE HAVE MANAGED TO LIFT DANCE CULTURE OFF THE DECKS AND ONTO THE NET

It's now one of the most famous dance labels around and can boast fans from across the globe, so it's sometimes hard to remember that the Ministry of Sound grew from humble beginnings. Its original London club sprung up to become a cornerstone for the Nineties boom in dance culture, and was rapidly elevated to 'superclub' status.

However, its activities as a major record label have also helped to develop and cultivate the music scene by breaking new acts or DJs. Much of what the Ministry has achieved has been down to packaging a lifestyle that doesn't necessarily end when kick-out time arrives. In a 'new media' context, this has seen its Web presence evolve into a focal point that not only markets Ministry products but offers multimedia content on demand. Relaunched earlier this year, we spoke to MoS.com's Head of Internet Stuart Lewis-Smith, to find out how the current site got its groove on.

"MUCH OF WHAT THE MINISTRY HAS ACHIEVED HAS BEEN DOWN TO PACKAGING A LIFESTYLE THAT DOESN'T END AT KICK-OUT TIME"

OUT WITH THE OLD...

One of the key characteristics that musical culture and technology share is change. MoS has in fact been online since 1994 and was one of the first companies to offer streaming content. However, rapid developments in consumer computing and connection speeds have opened doors, coinciding with the fleeting trends of club culture – prompting the company to revise and update what its domain represents earlier this year.

"After nearly nine years of leading the way with dance music online, it was clearly time for us to invest in our online property," explains Lewis-Smith, who oversees the in-house development team. "The previous Web site was very segmented, and as our archive of content grew it became increasingly difficult for our users to navigate and find the content they were looking for."

A particular remit for the team was to build a solution that would be both flexible and capable of supplying thousands of content-laden pages. "We also wanted to consolidate the content so that eCommerce, video, radio, music downloads, etc were fully integrated into the site, leading to a better user experience," reveals Lewis-Smith. This emphasis on dynamic but usable features now enables visitors to hear MOS radio broadcasts or watch Webcams and music videos with little fuss. A content management system was also introduced to alleviate the workload associated with manually maintaining the old HTML. Not only would this give company

SOUND.COM

"THE TEAM HAD TO BUILD A SOLUTION THAT WOULD BE FLEXIBLE AND COULD SUPPLY THOUSANDS OF CONTENT-LADEN PAGES"

members the chance to submit material directly, but also pave the way for future sites.

The designers also looked outside the company to gauge what public expectations were. "We surveyed our entire registered user base and asked what changes they wanted from our site," says Lewis-Smith. "The most common change wanted was quick and easy access to high quality audio and video content." This included more real-time information from radio show listeners, spawning the unique MoS Media Player users see today. It now forms a hub of communication through live communal chat, and underpins a strategy for effective yet unobtrusive marketing.

"We decided to move away from traditional forms of advertising, towards an integrated approach using video and audio ads before and during our streaming broadcasts, and creating bespoke integrated campaigns for our clients."

The reward for this research and promotion is that MoS.com is the largest online radio station

SITE STATS

NAME:	Ministry of Sound
URL:	www.ministryofsound.com
DESIGNED BY:	Existing in-house development team of eight technical staff
TOOLS:	Microsoft Content Management Server 2002 Microsoft Visual Studio.Net
EFFORT:	Six-month redesign period
HISTORY:	Original site launched 1994 Redesigned in 1999 Latest relaunch May 2003
HITS:	Seven million+ radio listeners a month

KEY FEATURE

The Ministry Web site really consists of two main elements. An integrated record store enables enthusiastic record buyers to quickly get hold of the latest releases, while the provision of streaming audio and video has proven mighty successful. Here MoS created its own special media player to fulfil the requests of its users, and effectively serves both radio and TV broadcasts. Listeners are able to plan what they want to hear by previewing on-air schedules, and can see what goes on within the studio via live Webcams. A collection of channels also provide filmed footage from major clubbing events, while a large selection of music promos can be viewed as well. CD-quality sound is piped at bit rates as low as 64Kbps thanks to Windows Media 9 compression, although the standard 32kps caters for most connections. Similarly, users have the option of streaming video content at various rates to cater for their connection speed.

in dance. Consistently featuring the world's best DJs, listening figures have risen steadily since the 2003 revamp. User feedback reveals that an important factor has been the provision of CD quality audio. As Lewis-Smith says: "Our listeners are often very passionate about their music and the high quality streaming really makes a difference." Similarly, MoSTV, a video showcase for music promos, interviews and event coverage, has proven so popular that it now has four channels. "We've made it easier to access

"AS THE MARKET LEADERS WE'LL ALWAYS AIM TO BE ONE STEP AHEAD OF EVERYBODY ELSE" – STUART LEWIS-SMITH

our archive of music content, which includes over 10,000 audio streams, 1,000 music videos, 1,000 hours of archived DJ mixes and over 220,000 music downloads. And our traffic figures have increased significantly."

The latest revamp is the most ambitious, with the Ministry's own eight-strong unit assigned to the task. "As Head of Internet, I was responsible for the project and budget," explains Lewis-Smith, "and we used our existing Internet team." A close partnership was also formed with Microsoft, who was consulted on implementation of Content Management Server 2002 and whose development tools were vital. The team used Visual Studio.Net throughout the process and regard its generation of ASP.NET pages as unrivalled. "Visual Studio makes coding faster and easier, and the debugging experience is superb," Lewis-Smith enthuses.

MOVE YOUR <BODY>

Managing huge amounts of rich media content has posed several problems for the team. Audio and video is submitted from various sources in a number of formats, making encoding and optimising it for broadcast a lengthy job. Luckily, the CMS helped them save time that was then used to work on bespoke material, including editing and post production. The issue of streaming content for users with varying bandwidths was also solved by embracing both broadband and lesser rates. "All streaming content on MoS.com is delivered in Windows Media 9 format, because of its optimised compressions and quality," says Lewis-Smith. "The first time a user requests streaming content, they're asked to select their preferred connection speed. This info is stored, and the correct stream is delivered to their computer."

One advantage that MoS has is that it already possesses distribution rights for music or video attached to its label, and is now building download rights into all new artist contracts at the point of signing new acts. In addition to its own catalogue, it needs to secure licences from other labels keen for the site to promote its artists.

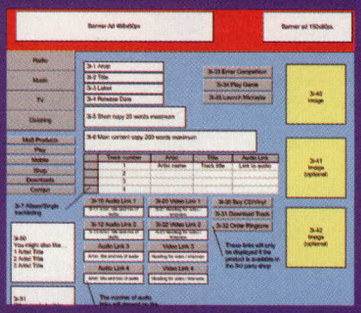
If the future is as good for the Ministry as the past, its site is headed for exciting times. Internet initiatives are seen as central to how the label generates revenue in coming years – building on their pioneering Legal Downloads service in 2002. An interesting announcement is a scheduled mobile version of MoS.com that will be geared to cell phone and PDA access. This will be joined by multilingual support for the current site that will have localised content across relevant locations. "In general, the site will continue to evolve to accommodate new technology and trends in the scene," says Lewis-Smith. "With such a strong brand, image is everything to us, and as the leaders in this market we'll always aim to be one step ahead of everybody else." ■

ARE YOU A USER?
www.ministryofsound.com

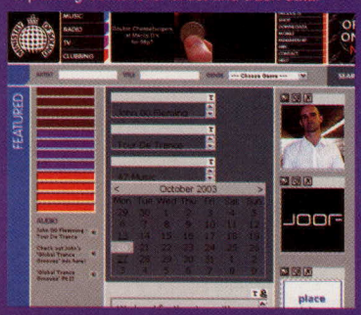
IN STAGES

We unearth some of the major development steps that went into ministryofsound.com's brilliantly relaunched site

STAGE 1: By looking at the previous site design you can see that the core content remains relatively similar. The shop, radio and download facilities are all present, although when comparing it to the newer look the general appearance seems dated. The team also felt it was necessary to improve flexibility and accessibility to its visitors.



STAGE 2: After brainstorming and sketching possible ideas, the design team put together a series of annotated page specifications. Each followed a basic template, with elements like buttons, adverts and images represented by boxes and panels. Here you can clearly see a mock-up for the music feature pages, explaining content for artist and track data.



STAGE 3: Once all the graphics are inserted and the template styled up, the content can be added. This image shows a shot of a page during Edit mode, where text can be tweaked or inserted. Much of this is taken care of by the content management system and lets staff update corresponding parts of the site.

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KEY FEATURES	SiteControl 3 Control Panel	Disk Space (Mb)	Monthly Traffic (Gb)	POP3/E-mail Accounts	Web-Based Mail Interface	Unlimited Aliases	E-mail Forwarding	PHP4/ASP3 Scripting	Perl5 Active CGI	XML Support	Frontpage Extensions	Real Media Professional	Windows Media Server 6	LINUX FEATURES MySQL Data Area	WINDOWS FEATURES Access Database(s)	MS SQL Database(s)	MONTHLY FEE (excl VAT)
SILVER	Yes	100	1	5	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	0	0	0	£8.95
GOLD	Yes	200	4	10	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	1	1	0	£14.95
GOLD PLUS	Yes	200	6	30	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	1	2	0	£19.95
PLATINUM	Yes	500	10	50	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	2	2	1	£49.95
PLATINUM PLUS	Yes	500	15	100	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	2	2	1	£89.95

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SOUND AND VISION

WORDS: CHRIS SCHMIDT IMAGERY: SIMON DANAHER

"THERE'S NEVER BEEN ANY DOUBT AS TO THE BENEFIT OF VIEWING VIDEO OVER THE NET. YOU'D MUCH RATHER SEE AND HEAR PEOPLE TALKING TO YOU THAN READ THEIR WORDS..."

SOUND AND VISION

THE NET HAS PROGRESSED BEYOND BLAND STATIC PAGES, AND NOW ALLOWS YOU TO INCORPORATE ALL MANNER OF MULTIMEDIA ON YOUR SITE. CHRIS SCHMIDT GIVES YOU THE LOWDOWN...

VISION

In the beginning the World Wide Web was full of words. Content was very factual, academic and dry, and it wasn't until the launch of the Mosaic browser that images were supported. But even these tended to be dull diagrams allowing crusty lecturers to illustrate their research papers.

As the medium gathered popularity and HTML developed, the Internet moved towards presenting information in a more familiar way, using tables to lay out marginally more interesting information using basic DTP styles, and sites started to emerge that were aimed at entertaining rather than informing.

Before you knew it, audio was rife on the Net, with sounds aplenty and streaming radio sites cropping up all over the shop. When audio was introduced it was only a matter of time before video would be approached, and it wasn't too long before a number of formats were found – until things finally settled into the dominant camps of QuickTime and RealVideo.

Internet audio and video is no new thing. It's been around for years, although it has suffered from limitations imposed by the media which can be summarised in a single word – bandwidth. Feeding the huge file sizes complete with audio and video through traditional dial-up accounts can be like trying to suck a grape through a straw. However, with broadband gathering pace, the metaphor can be adapted to include a much wider straw and a bag full of grapes that have gone through the blender. In the next few pages, we'll consider the fundamentals of using audio and video on your Web site. First off, let's take a look at how you can create a visual fest with the help of video.

THE PROS AND CONS OF VIDEO

There has never been any doubt as to the benefit of actually viewing video over the Internet. After all, if there was an option with TV you'd much rather see and hear people talking to you than read their words and view a thumbnail image. Apple and Real were quick to pick up on this and see further than the constraints of the time, to continue with the development of their respective QuickTime and RealVideo formats in anticipation of a future age when delivery wouldn't be such an issue.

■ The QuickTime site has long been the definitive site for viewing the latest movie trailers. Pure streaming techniques mean you can view large, high quality videos within a reasonable timeframe

The initial compression methods used by both formats were relatively impressive, although still nowhere near small enough for practical use. The basic problem was always evident in that a substantial file would need to be downloaded before anything could be viewed – and with downloaded megabytes equalling playback seconds, it would need a keen and dedicated audience to attempt even the smallest clip.

However, despite such issues there has always been a wealth of video available on the Internet. Movie distributors and games developers have been at the forefront, as people have always been impatient to get the first glimpse of their products that can only be effectively presented in such a way. News sites such as Reuters and the BBC also benefit dramatically from the integration of video into their sites, as written copy and static images are complemented by such audio-visual means.

In such circumstances, video becomes an almost essential element that enhances a Web site and makes visitors return. Balancing out content with video is a crucial consideration when introducing the moving image into your online equation. No one really wants to wait 20 minutes to watch a clip of some old CEO providing a

SOFTWARE 4 SOFTWARE SOLUTIONS

So you've got your footage on your camera and you're ready to chuck it online. If only life were so simple... There's the small matter of editing your film and converting it into your preferred streaming format first. Here's the rundown on the kind of kit you'll need to consider before unleashing your directorial debut

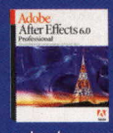
NAME: Adobe Premiere Pro
PRICE: £580
URL: www.adobe.co.uk/products/premiere

The latest version of Adobe's popular video-editing package is for some reason a PC-only affair, but if you're serious about your moving image and you don't happen to dabble in Macs, this could be the choice for you.

NAME: Apple Final Cut Pro 4.0
PRICE: £715
URL: www.apple.com/finalcutpro

What Premiere has become to the PC world, Final Cut Pro is to the Macintosh community. There's a notable leap in the cost, but this Apple-developed software is the ultimate video-editing solution for those who prefer Jobs to Gates.

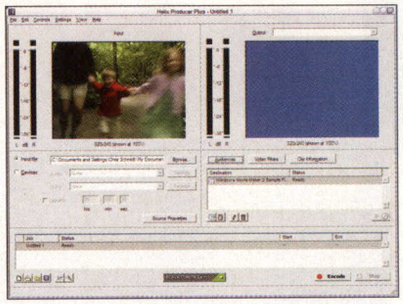
NAME: Adobe After Effects 6.0
PRICE: £620
URL: www.adobe.co.uk/products/aftereffects



A complementary title to previous editing options, After Effects can be compared to the Photoshop of digital video, allowing you to create special effects to add a little something extra to your clips. Check out the Pro version for more advanced options.

NAME: Apple QuickTime Pro
PRICE: $30 (£18)
URL: www.apple.com/quicktime/upgrade

Chances are you'll have the free QuickTime player already installed on your system. Upgrading to the Pro version for such a token amount of cash is a basic requirement if you want to convert your media into this popular format.



■ Helix Producer allows the conversion of regular video clips into Real formats. With full control over the results, the software is one of the easiest to get to grips with

corporate welcome to a site when a paragraph of text can be ignored just as easily!

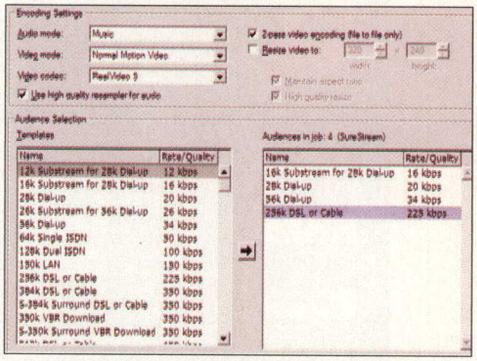
Despite all the obvious benefits of integrating video, chances are your audience will be forced to endure slow connection rates which lead to jerky playback of a stamp-sized image that's unidentifiable due to the pixelated image quality. Unless, of course, they have broadband...

BIG FAT PIPES

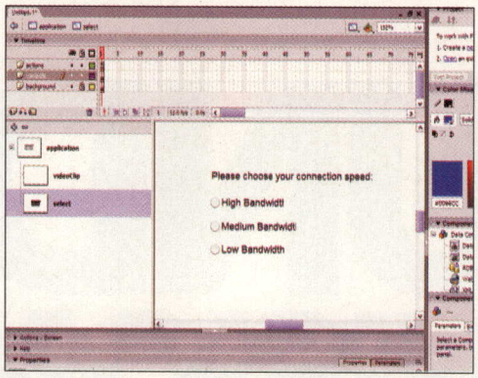
With ADSL a whole new playing field comes into effect. At ten times the speed of dial-up accounts, anyone who's experienced the Ferrari of broadband is unlikely to go back to the Robin Reliant of the 56Kb modem, and video suddenly becomes not only an option but also an expectation for broadband users.

When you're designing sites it can be all too easy to fall into the trap of assuming that everyone shares your fast connection speeds, but the fact is you're in the minority. You'll need to consider dial-up users by providing multiple versions of any clips you want to include, so ADSL users can take full advantage of increased quality, while 56Kb modem users aren't excluded. And a substantial download will still take precious time through broadband, which can dissuade visitors from hanging around too long – in which case you may want to consider streaming options for your video.

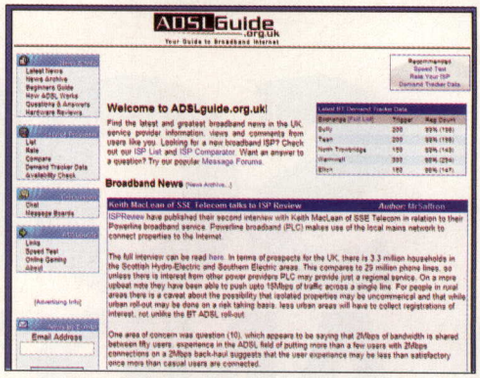
Traditionally, video is delivered not unlike the vast



■ Configuring Real clips through Helix Producer is simple, with preconfigured settings easily accessible. You can even create multiple conversions in one file, placing the streams on the server



■ Flash 2004 provides advanced tools for the creation of online video content, with templates for common features such as File Selection to cater for users with varying connection speeds



■ Don't expect everyone to have broadband just yet. Sites such as **ADSLguide.org.uk** give valuable advice to users considering the switch, but it'll be some time before you can take this for granted

majority of Web content, sent down the pipe to the user as a complete file that they're able to play back once the transfer is complete. Naturally, longer and larger clips require some time to complete, and with many dial-up users paying by the minute and suffering rather temperamental connections, this quickly becomes a task that is only carried out for essential files.

PROTECTION RACKET

There are additional issues to be considered too, when delivering your media in a way that means you're effectively giving away copies of your files which users can store or use in ways you may not have anticipated or approve of. This can be a particularly sensitive issue when dealing with clips to which you or your client may hold the copyright. For these reasons, it can be understood how the introduction of Internet streaming changed the Web as we knew it.

As an experienced Web user, we assume you've already come into contact with streaming technologies via video, audio or, more commonly, through the Macromedia Flash SWF format. The advantages are obvious, as playback – especially through broadband connections – is virtually instantaneous and can last a seemingly infinite amount of time, depending on the limitations and compression used in the information being delivered.

Streaming works by breaking down large files into smaller packets which are delivered independently of each other. The client player software, whether QuickTime, Real or Flash, then 'buffers' or stores the data it receives until it can provide a constant feed of data while still receiving more. This method of buffering ensures smooth playback over reasonable connections, but can result in dropout if the delivery is compromised due to slower modems or network congestion.

It was through the adoption of a new Internet protocol called the User Datagram Protocol (UDP) and new encoding techniques that streaming became possible. UDP made the process feasible by transmitting data more efficiently than previous methods, although continued developments such as the RealTime Streaming Protocol (RTSP) are improving things even further.

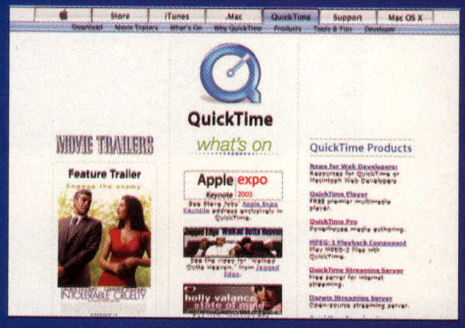
UDP and RTSP are ideal for such delivery methods, due to the high priority placed on continuous streaming over absolute document security more common in other methods. In contrast to TCP or HTTP, a UDP server will continue to send information regardless of whether a packet is dropped, causing brief glitches in playback instead of silence.

Such methods are considered pure streams because of this dedicated protocol and, as such, need to be

STREAMING HEAVEN

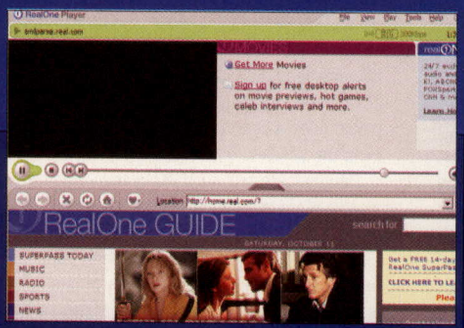
WHEN IT'S DONE WELL...

STREAMING VIDEO FROM YOUR SITE CAN MAKE YOU VERY POPULAR INDEED. HERE ARE THREE OF THE BEST STREAMING SITES AROUND...



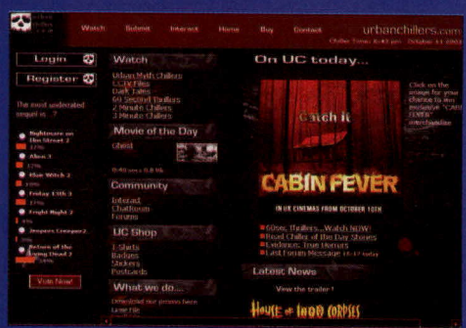
QUICKTIME
www.apple.com/quicktime

The QuickTime site has long been the domain of the movie trailer from where the latest Hollywood blockbusters can be first previewed. Apple has been sensible about the way such sizeable files are presented by letting users choose their size of files, depending on their connection speeds.



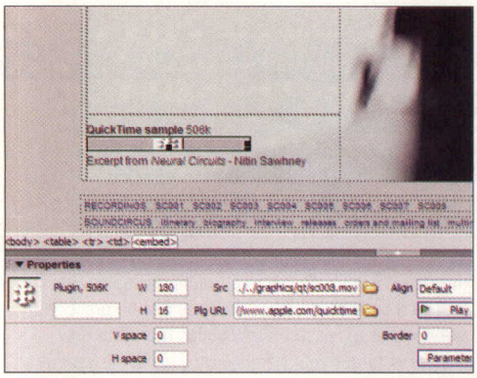
REALONE GUIDE
home.real.com

View this site through the RealOne player to get the most from the immersive multimedia environment that is the Real Web site. For a taste of things to come you'll need to sign up for the SuperPass, which provides access to online content from the likes of the BBC, CNN and MTV.

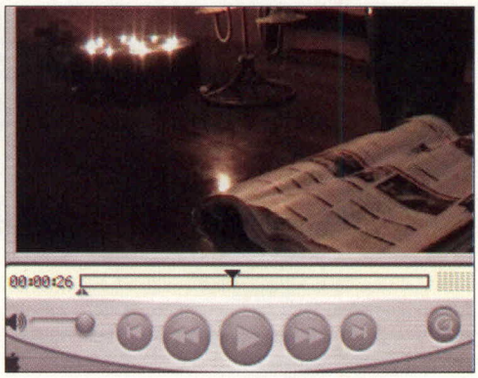


URBAN CHILLERS
www.urbanchillers.com

A dark and atmospheric site which presents a number of amateur but incredibly well-made horror shorts. The films are submitted by site users to form a community, and QuickTime is used to provide short movies. Just don't stay long late at night when you're on your own...



■ Dreamweaver allows integration of clips through the Insert panel. QuickTime files are plug-in content, and embedding through Dreamweaver will create a pseudo-streaming instance of such a file



■ The QuickTime Pro interface is identical to the regular free version. The only difference is the inclusion of Export options that allow you to convert clips into the Apple format

delivered through a dedicated server. Other formats such as Shockwave, Flash and QuickTime which were originally developed to run from a standard HTTP server are therefore considered pseudo-streaming, and while they may be cheaper and often easier to use, they are simply not up to scratch for professional broadcasting situations.

Streaming techniques can now be found across the board where large files need to be made available quickly. However, as a potential author of such files you need to be aware that balancing quality and file size is still a crucial factor. For example, if your video clips are too large in terms of file size, reducing the dimensions will result in smoother and more consistent playback.

COMPRESSING FORMATS

Despite the advances of UDP and RTSP delivery protocols, streaming media would not have been possible without continued developments in encoding algorithms or codecs that compress or decompress both audio and video data. As with images, there are two kinds of compression that can be applied to video and any supported audio tracks – lossy and lossless. The former provides the smallest file sizes through discarding data during the encoding process by merging frame content, for example where constant background elements may be unaffected during a clip of a moving foreground character. Lossless compression, as the name suggests, provides the purest form of conversion, as it retains all the information contained within the original file. However, this is rarely used, as the compromise between file size and quality is negligible with this method.

Turning full circle, regular downloadable video formats such as MPEG and single rate Real clips, for example (which streaming has strived for so long to improve and replace), have also benefited from such codec and compression developments. This makes them more efficient options for the delivery of video files if a pure streaming server is beyond your requirements or budget.

Real and QuickTime are traditionally the more established formats with original tendencies towards Windows and Apple platforms respectively, although these boundaries have become increasingly blurred, making them equally respectable on either platform. Windows Media format is specific to the Microsoft Operating System and provides some excellent compression and playback, although your audience will be limited. Flash on the other hand, is much more cross-platform, and with recent developments in the MX 2004 range, it can be argued that Flash is set to become the definitive media playback format. But regardless of your preferred option, your hosting company may well have already made the decision for you...

HOSTING STREAMS

The Real method tends to have the edge with the average hosting package, although generally the kind of support you'll be getting for your media clips will be through modified HTTP methods. If you want pure streaming options you'll need to turn to the services of a dedicated hosting company. This can quickly become expensive, depending on the number of clips and their size, as well as how popular they might be. A substantial video clip even when encoded and compressed can all too easily run into file sizes of tens if not hundreds of megabytes. And if your clip becomes the next dancing baby, you'll need to further consider any bandwidth limitations your account may have.

A basic account may be adequate for more modest needs, often providing a moderate amount of space of around 50Mb and a 0.5Gb bandwidth transfer limit, but if you have greater ambitions for your video, various dedicated hosting companies such as Astream (**www.astream.co.uk**) or InterCall (**www.intercall.co.uk**), can provide options that may be more suitable with various storage capacities and transfer limits.

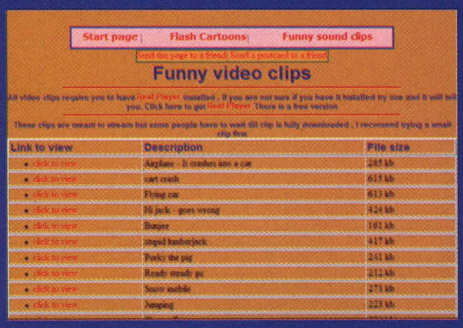
There's no cheap way around hosting video, though. The size of the clips and the resources needed to push out such large files will mean another regular chunk of your finances being taken by your new hosting company.

"IF YOUR CLIP ATTRACTS THOUSANDS OF VISITORS, YOU'LL NEED TO FURTHER CONSIDER ANY BANDWIDTH LIMITATIONS YOUR ACCOUNT MAY HAVE..."

STREAMING HELL

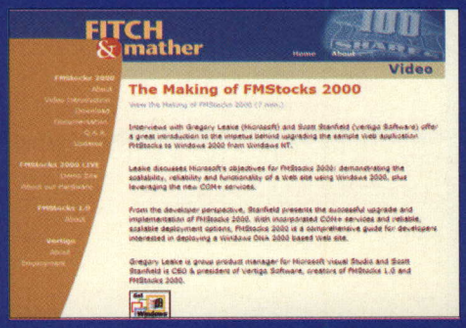
WHEN IT'S DONE BADLY...

MAKE A HASH OF YOUR STREAMS AND YOU CAN DRIVE VISITORS AWAY QUICKLY AND PERMANENTLY. HERE'S A FEW VIDEO NASTIES...



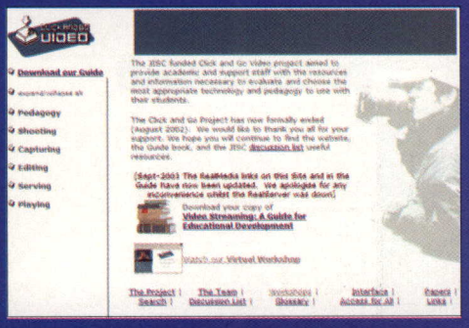
FUNNY VIDEO CLIPS
www.funs.co.uk/clips

Why such sites exist is a mystery. Design is at a minimum, with only basic links that allow you to download clips for local playback. No streaming is involved and the subject matter is often tasteless. The only things such sites manage to do is create network congestion.



FITCH AND MATHER
www.fmstocks.com/video.asp

Forcing users to download a 14Mb Windows-specific ASF file of a dry corporate introduction to a company's aims and objectives has to be one of the most common faux pas. A classic case of taking yourself a little too seriously and suffering a reality bypass...



CLICK AND GO VIDEO
www.clickandgovideo.ac.uk

This is an admirable project that could provide some useful information as you develop your streaming video skills. However, many of the videos require additional plug-in components, which leads to distracting downloads becoming necessary. An old problem that could easily be avoided.

AUDIO

"A FREE SOLUTION EXISTS THAT ENABLES ANYONE TO PLAY THEIR MUSIC ONLINE WITHOUT SO MUCH AS A HINT OF AN EXPENSIVE HOSTING DEAL IN SIGHT..."

Many of the guiding principles of video streaming apply just as keenly to audio – after all, you're merely talking about a different, slightly less bandwidth-heavy, media format. This means that anyone harbouring ambitions of streaming from their own site is going to have to invest in a robust server solution, not to mention some fairly high-end software to boot. Unlike video streaming, however, a free solution exists that enables anyone to play their music online for nothing, without so much as a hint of an expensive hosting deal in sight.

Net radio has been the next big thing on at least two different occasions in the past, and has twice failed to live up to expectations due to lack of interest caused by bandwidth issues. The concept is simple, though – people use a player or browser (the number of Net radio-ready tools grows steadily by the day) to pick up a list of channels, then click on one to start the stream to their machine. It's a doddle for the user, getting the music quickly, easily and – more importantly – for free. And it's actually surprisingly easy to set up your own radio station as well.

If you want the easiest option of all, check out SHOUTcast (**www.shoutcast.com**) for information on its hassle-free streaming facility. Sign up (keeping your hands firmly in your pockets) then download the software. From there on in, all you need to do is tell the program which audio files to play, and you're there. Anyone running WinAmp (it's PC users only) can then tune into your tunes. It's astonishingly simple, but it does the trick in getting your music to the masses quickly.

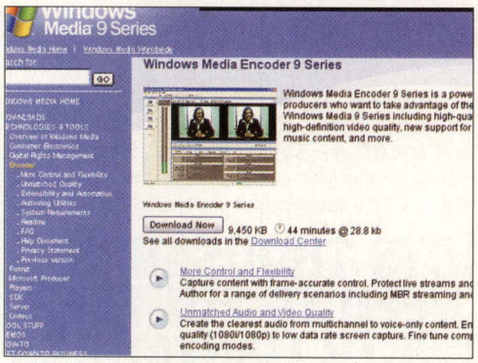
For more professional radio wannabes, the Live365 (**www.live365.com**) service should bring much-needed salvation. This fine service provides a range of broadcast solutions for everyone from part-time bedroom spinners through to companies with aspirations of ousting Auntie from her privileged radio pedestal. The basic service will cost you $7.45 (£4.45) a month, and grants you 100Mb of space to store your MP3s on (by the time you've compressed them, this should equal at least 50 songs) and the ability to stream your songs to 25 people at the same time. The services on offer rise incrementally to $99.95 (£60) a month, for which you can stream live to up to 400 people, and also store over 2Gb of your sounds ready for broadcasting.

DO IT FOR REAL

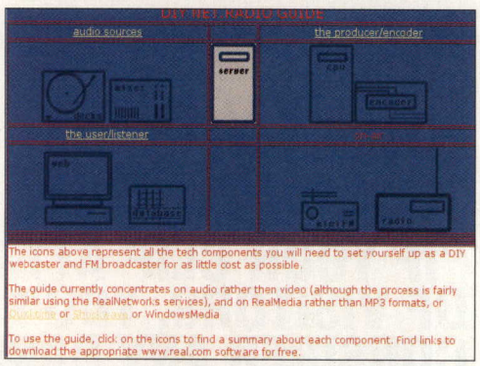
Streaming over a virtual radio station is great for getting your voice across with little effort, but it presents one insurmountable problem for anyone serious about streaming audio – namely that people stream your music from a generic radio location, and not from your hard drive. In essence, you're not doing the streaming at all – all you're doing is uploading your files to a central server where they can be grabbed by someone else. For true audiophiles then, the only answer is to get your hands dirty with some serious streaming software.

The main tool for this purpose is currently Helix Producer, an offshoot of the Real Player format used by many. Whatever your thoughts on the player itself, there can be no denying that Real is still the number one streaming format on the Web, thanks largely to the small file sizes it produces and the ease with which you can encode files in this format. It's for these reasons that you'll find the BBC and UEFA.com using the Real format to stream live broadcasts over the Web.

Setting an audio stream follows the same basic path as a video broadcast, in that you have to



■ If you want to aim your audio streams at the majority of Net users, then you could do a lot worse than popping along to the Microsoft site to find out more on the ASF format

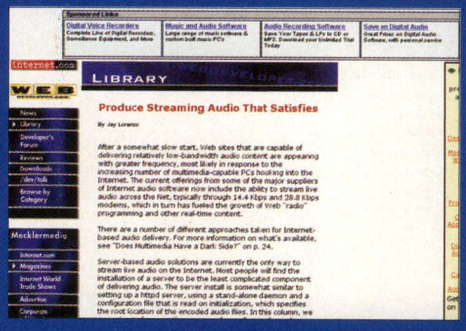


■ The low tech demeanour of the DIY.net Radio Guide disguises a brilliant beginners' guide to streaming audio. Check it out at **www.irational.org/radio/radio_guide**

FURTHER READING

WANT TO FIND OUT MORE ON SETTING UP YOUR AUDIO STREAM? POP ALONG TO ANY OF THESE THREE BEAUTIES TO DEVELOP YOUR STREAMING KNOWLEDGE YET FURTHER

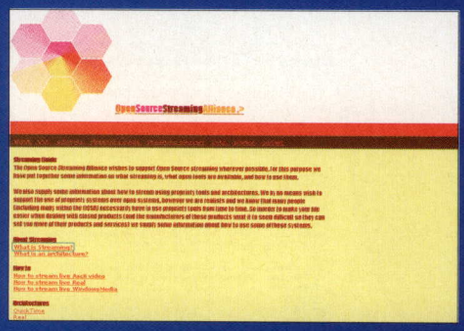
AUDIO ADVICE



WEB DEVELOPER

webdeveloper.internet.com/multimedia/multimedia_produce_streaming_audio.html

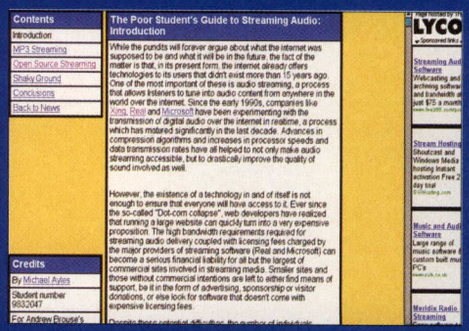
Once you've typed it all in, you'll find that this site has more useful information on setting up an audio stream than you can shake a stick at. Simple, concise and very effective advice is the name of the game here.



STREAMING ALLIANCE

www.streamingalliance.org/guide.html

Trumpeting the open source cause, the Streaming Alliance also has some neat beginners' tips on setting up video and audio streams. If you're struggling to tell your Real from your QuickTime, then pop along here for streaming salvation.



STUDENT'S GUIDE TO STREAMING MEDIA

members.lycos.co.uk/igotyousucka/hob/News/streaming3.html

This is a site showing how to set up streams without spending cash. Its comprehensive collection of pages demonstrate some of the tools and functions you'll expect to use.

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Host as many websites as you wish on your choice of UNIX/Linux or Windows 2003 web servers. Quickly set-up new sites and manage existing ones using our industry leading control panel. Define hosting plans for your customers and customise their control panels with your brand enabling you to offer high end, profitable hosting solutions to your clients.

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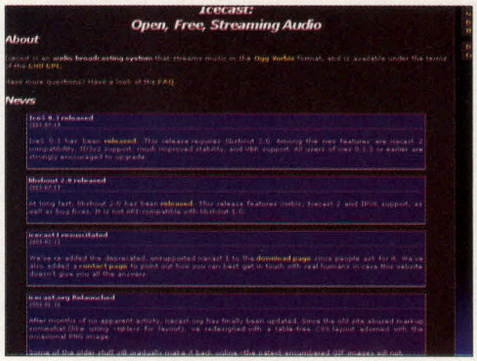
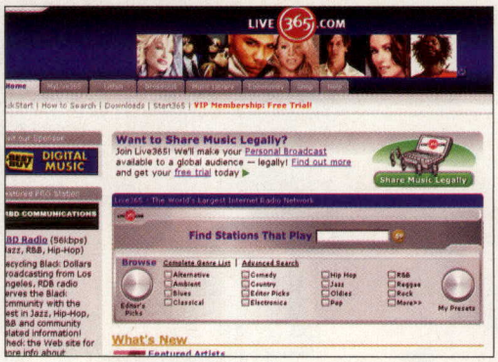


■ If you want to get into streaming audio, but don't want the expense traditionally associated with it, take a look at Icecast (**icecast.org**) for a glimpse into how free Net radio really works



■ You'll have to pay for Live365 broadcasting privileges, but it's worth it. Quite simply, this is the best online radio service around, and gives you a glimpse into how the pros do it

optimise your file before encoding it, then get the server ready for future streams. It's worth taking each step at a time, though. File optimisation is often the one step people forget to take, yet it can make a significant difference to how your finished stream sounds. The Real encoding process is lossy, meaning that 'non-essential' parts of the file will be removed. It makes sense then to ensure that your original file is as crystal clear and sharp as possible. And if you're thinking that it doesn't matter because the Real encoding will introduce hiss and cackle later, then think again. Photocopying documents is a similar 'lossy' task, but you'd never place an important document on a photocopier with a splodge of jam on it, would you?

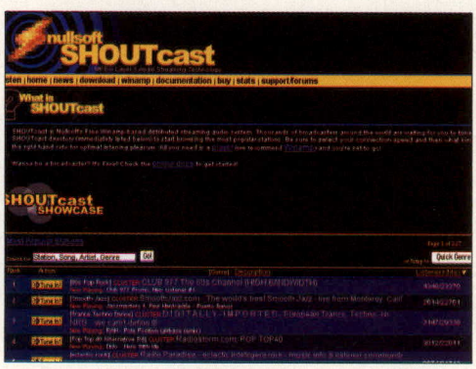
I STREAM OF JEANNIE

Once you've got your audio files sorted, it's time to encode them for streaming. Helix Producer (available at **www.realnetworks.com**) does the job for you, but remember that you'll need to set Helix Server running before you can start streaming properly (see the previous section for an eye-opener on streaming servers). Quality varies, but Real Audio files have long been established as the most compact of sound files – it's been estimated that you can encode an hour's worth of audio in less than 10Mb of data. One thing to remember, though, is that much of the audio streaming technology you find even today is built with the limitations of the Net's past in mind (when the vast majority of Net users struggled with meagre 14.4Kb modems). You should now feel free to encode for slightly more advanced browsers, although you're going to need a hefty collection of files to make streaming worthwhile if you're aiming your site exclusively at broadband users!

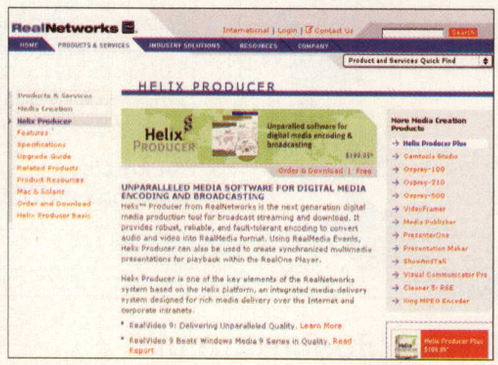
OTHER OPTIONS

It's not all about Real, though, and you'll find some decent streaming options available from Microsoft and QuickTime. The latter's audio streaming technology follows the same pattern as its video counterpart, and it's always worth checking out the QuickTime option for ultimate usability. This is the only one of the big three that will allow Mac users to check out your site. Microsoft's entry to the streaming arena, ASF, is a robust solution that allows people to see and hear your streams within the native Windows Media Player. ■

"FILE OPTIMISATION IS OFTEN THE ONE STEP PEOPLE FORGET TO TAKE, YET CAN MAKE A SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE TO HOW YOUR FINISHED STREAM SOUNDS"



■ Free and easy is the name of the game at Winamp-sponsored SHOUTcast. Sign up, tell it which songs you want it to play, then sit back as people listen into your MP3 collection



■ We've already mentioned Helix Producer with regards to streaming video, but there's no denying that the Real service has a wealth of impressive tools for audiophiles as well

INSPIRATION

SOUNDS GOOD TO US

SOURCES OF INSPIRATION FOR THOSE IN NEED OF AUDIO SATISFACTION

Ministry of Sound
www.ministryofsound.com
You've probably just read all about the various techniques used on the Ministry Of Sound Web site (see page 16). One of the site's main shouts is the way in which it allows you to tune into your favourite Ministry tracks without having to pay for the privilege. Perfect for the Ministry Of Sound because streams are one-off listens, it's ideal for you as well, because you get to hear your best dance tunes any time.

BBC Radio
www.bbc.co.uk/radio
Where would a round-up of the best streaming audio sites on the Web be without a nod to Auntie's radio exploits? You can listen live to most of the BBC's main and local radio stations – and the kind folks at the Beeb even give you the choice of tuning in using Windows ASF or Real Audio. Nice.

KCRW
www.kcrw.com
The perfect example of how to do Web radio well, KCRW specialises in live acoustic sets from some of the most well-known acts on the planet. Tune in for Beck, Coldplay, Queens of the Stone Age and many, many more. Beaming from the US, British listeners might miss out on some of the best live streams, but don't worry, as there's an absolutely immense collection of archived footage for you to stream. Again, you can't download anything, so listening in – even to streams – is exactly like turning on the wireless, only with Real Audio.

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Step 2: Select Specification

RaQ 128 NEW x3 Triple Bandwidth
128 MB/20GB/**15 GB Data Transfer** (was 5)

RaQ 256 NEW x3 Triple Bandwidth
256 MB/20.4GB/**60 GB Data Transfer** (was 20)

RaQ 512 NEW x3 Triple Bandwidth
512 MB/30GB/**90 GB Data Transfer** (was 30)

RaQ 550 256 NEW x3 Triple Bandwidth
256MB/40GB/**60 GB Data Transfer** (was 20)

RaQ 550 512 NEW x3 Triple Bandwidth
512MB/2x80GB/**90 GB Data Transfer** (was 30)

Entry NEW x3 Triple Bandwidth
Intel Celeron 2Ghz/128MB/40GB/
30 GB Data Transfer (was 10)

Pro NEW x3 Triple Bandwidth
P4 2.4Ghz/256MB/80GB/
60 GB Data Transfer (was 20)

Ultra NEW x3 Triple Bandwidth
P4 3Ghz/512MB/2x80GB/
90 GB Data Transfer (was 30)

Ultra II NEW x3 Triple Bandwidth
2x Xeon 2.4Ghz/1GB/2x80GB Hard Disks (RAID 1)/**120 GB Data Transfer** (was 40)

Enterprise NEW x3 Triple Bandwidth
2x Xeon 2.8Ghz/1GB/4x80GB Hard Disks (RAID 5)/**160 GB Data Transfer** (was 55)

Xeon Plus NEW x3 Triple Bandwidth
2x Xeon 3Ghz/2GB/4x120GB Hard Disks (RAID5)/**160 GB Data Transfer** (was 55)

Xeon MAX NEW x3 Triple Bandwidth
4x Xeon 2Ghz/2GB/4x120GB Hard Disks (RAID5)/**300 GB Data Transfer** (was 100)

Data Class NEW x3 Triple Bandwidth
2x AMD Opteron 1.8Ghz/4GB/4x200GB Hard Disks (RAID5)/**600 GB Data Transfer** (was 200)

Advance x3 Triple Bandwidth
2xUltra Web Servers/Ultra II Database & Ultra II Mail Server/**300 GB Data Transfer** (was 100)

Corporate x3 Triple Bandwidth
3xUltra II Web Servers/Ultra Mail Server/ Enterprise Database Server/**750 GB Data Transfer** (was 250)

Fire V100 128 NEW x3 Triple Bandwidth
500MHZ/128MB/40GB EIDE/
60 GB Data Transfer (was 20)

Fire V100 1GB NEW x3 Triple Bandwidth
500MHZ/1GB/2x40GB EIDE/
90 GB Data Transfer (was 30)

Fire V120 1GB NEW x3 Triple Bandwidth
650MHZ/1GB/36GB Ultra SCSI/
120 GB Data Transfer (was 40)

Enterprise NEW x3 Triple Bandwidth
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300 GB Data Transfer (was 100)

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210 GB Data Transfer (was 70)

Step 3: Select Security

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£100 per month

Protect your machine from unwanted visitors. Web based control panel allows you to add rules and deny undesirable visitors.

Backup
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Weekly - £60 per month

Running databases, holding customer information or involved in e-commerce? If your answer is "yes" then order backup now and benefit from free restores if required!

Advanced Systems Monitoring
£30 per month

The ultimate tool for knowing how your server is operating. Pre-empt critical failure and minimise server downtime with messaging via e-mail or SMS.

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Advanced SLA:
Specially tailored for Enterprise level services and above, the Advanced SLA is perfect for mission critical sites. Backed by a money back guarantee, benefit from 99.9% connectivity, four hour hardware resolution, 30 minute reboot guarantee, 1:1 contention ratio on bandwidth, a price freeze and a named personal Account Manager.

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w: **www.dedicated-servers.co.uk**

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WORDS: DANNY MCALEER

DESPITE THE INCREASING POPULARITY OF BROADBAND, IT'S STILL IMPERATIVE TO MAKE YOUR SITE LOAD AS FAST AS POSSIBLE. HERE'S A BRIEF GUIDE TO WHY AND HOW...

It's a common conception that folk in the UK are a patient bunch, dutifully queuing for hours of our lives for things that really ought to take minutes. This fortitude however, rarely translates to the Web. If a page doesn't at least yield something within a couple of seconds, we move on to the next site. While this isn't necessarily true of visitors who have specifically targeted your Web site, those who chance upon your pages through search engine results may not wait for very long.

The level of tolerance for the time it takes for a page to download is a contentious issue. Some argue that 15 seconds is just about acceptable which, with a modest connection speed, equates to a total size, including all the dependent files, of only 30Kb. While it's not inconceivable to produce a page of this size, it can limit the functional scope. Perhaps 60Kb is therefore a better yardstick with which to beat a designer. Maybe it's best to judge it on your own patience for downloads.

In any case, everyone knows that optimising your site for speedier downloads is hugely important. But how much attention is really paid to the minutiae of eking out those last few kilobytes? And does optimising a Web page really mean that you have to exclude your lovely images or Flash animations? Well, not necessarily. There is always another way...

NARROWBAND SITES

Despite the increasing uptake of DSL and other broadband connections at home, as a designer you still have to accommodate the lowest common denominator. This means that, until modems are all relegated to the technology dump, you have to ensure your site doesn't take days to download on a 56Kb dial-up connection.

It's therefore become common practice among commercial sites to produce narrowband and broadband sites in tandem. This gives the user a choice of either a functional and fast experience, or one replete with multimedia in all its resplendent, bandwidth-munching glory. If you prefer the former, here's a quick look at measures to take to make your site modem-friendly.

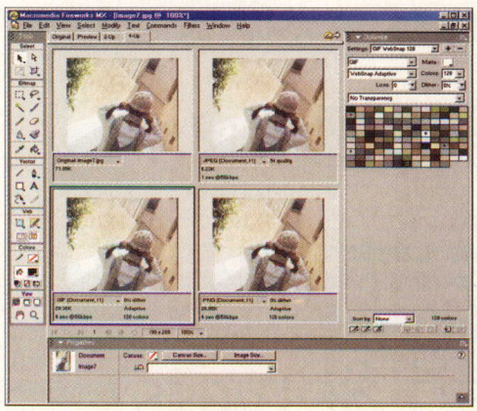
With the exception of media such as Flash movies or streaming audio, the largest contributor to a typical Web page's overall size is its images – so it makes sense to target this area first when optimising a site. The analogy about a picture being worth a thousand words is apt: you could have a thousand words on a site and the page would still be smaller than if you used a picture in its place.

WOT NO PICTURES?

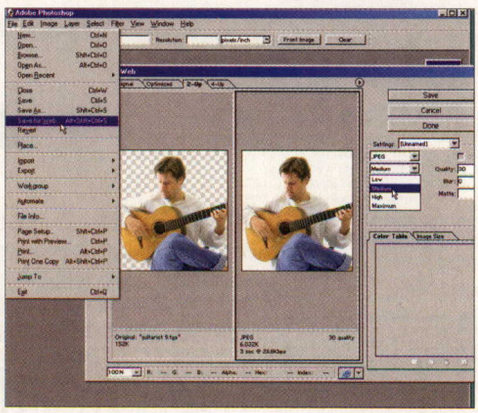
Of course, removing all the pictures from your site would mean a particularly dull experience and isn't necessary. But you do need to strike a balance between what's essential and what's nothing more than eye candy. Sites such as Google, Yahoo! and HotBot are testament to what a few well-placed pictures can do. In fact, using colour elements rendered in HTML or style sheets makes a good substitute for pictures. Some stunning designs can be achieved with code alone, such as creating boxouts with different coloured cells. It's even possible to render 3D-styled rollover buttons in CSS alone, without so much as a whiff of a GIF.

Once you've been as frugal as is painfully possible with the use of images, you can still reduce the size of a Web page by compressing the remaining pictures. The right choice of format can help enormously, too. The general rule of thumb is that for solid colour artwork such as buttons, maps, diagrams, line art and banners, GIF compressed images work best. For other graphics, including photographs or

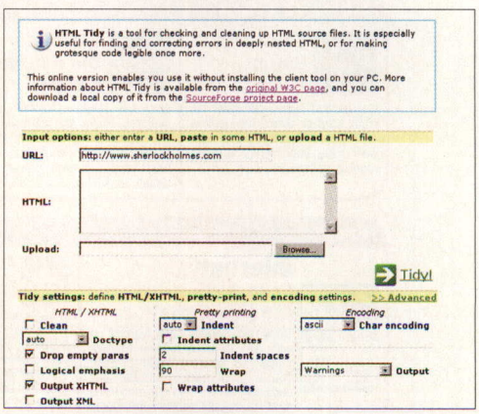
"FLASH ITSELF IS A PRETTY EFFICIENT FORMAT, AND CAN BE HEAVILY OPTIMISED; THE PROBLEM IS NOT WITH THE TECHNOLOGY BUT THE MISUSE OF IT"



■ Macromedia's Fireworks MX is one of the best applications for converting images correctly for the Web, and even generating Web-ready pictures from scratch

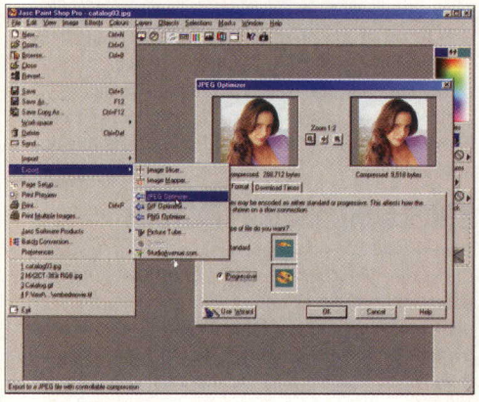


■ If you're using Photoshop, always use the Save for Web option. Not only does it contain tools for reducing file sizes, but it will also save your JPEGs in the proper Web format



■ Check and tidy up your HTML with dedicated online utilities such as **infohound.net/tidy/** or **www.thedumbterminal.co.uk/services/tidy.shtml**

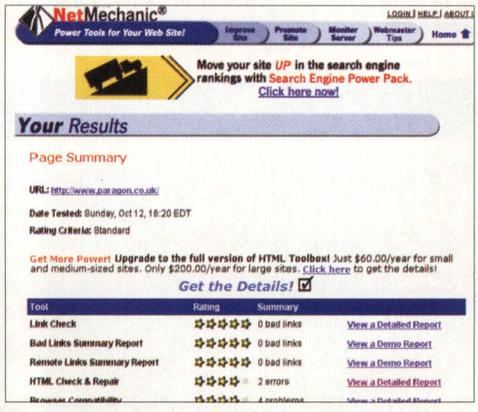
loading sites



■ Paint Shop Pro has built-in wizards for optimising JPEG, GIF and PNG formatted images ready for the Web

images that use gradients, JPEGs will yield a far better rate of compression.

Quite often, JPEG images are not sufficiently compressed, thus wasting lots of potential savings. The Web is not a print medium, and so quality can be compromised in favour of shorter download times. Additionally, saving JPEGs in progressive rather than standard format aids in the perceived time it takes to load a page. While progressive JPEGs actually take as long to download, they do so incrementally, giving the impression that the page is at least doing something.



■ You can test up to five pages for speed and HTML accuracy on your site for free with NetMechanic (**netmechanic.com/toolbox/html-code.htm**)

Another factor that can cause perceptible lags in the time it takes to display a site is the use of tables. Nearly every site on the Web uses a table somewhere to construct a layout. The problem is that browsers tend not to display anything until all the table data has loaded. Therefore if your page is comprised of one enormous table structure, nothing will appear for ages. In these cases it's best to split the structure into smaller, separate entities. Also, specifying each cell's width properties will decrease the time it takes the browser to render table layouts.

GET STYLISH

Using Cascading Style Sheets can also be beneficial because it negates the huge pile of **<font>** tags it would usually take to format a page's text. However, if you do use CSS to format elements, you should reduce the number of inline instances. Instead, move them to an external CSS file, so that it can then be shared across the whole site. The same is true of JavaScript functions, such as those used for rollovers, navigation menus and other such interactions. By moving them to an externally linked JavaScript file, your visitor's browser needs only load the file once into its cache, rather than having to bloat each page with the same function over and over.

Incorrectly formatted HTML and other scripting errors can also result in pages taking longer than necessary to parse, or worse still, prevent parts of the page from loading at all. It's also advisable to rummage through your pages when checking for errors and browser compatibility, and remove any superfluous tags.

THE BROADBAND SITE MISNOMER

If you've kept the modem users with a narrowband rendering of your site, you may think you can safely explore the potential of a more exciting multimedia experience. However, even under the pretence of creating a broadband site, you don't have carte blanche to laden it with gadgetry. Although DSL is up to ten times faster, its users tend to be ten times more impatient. They expect everything immediately, so the rules of optimisation still apply.

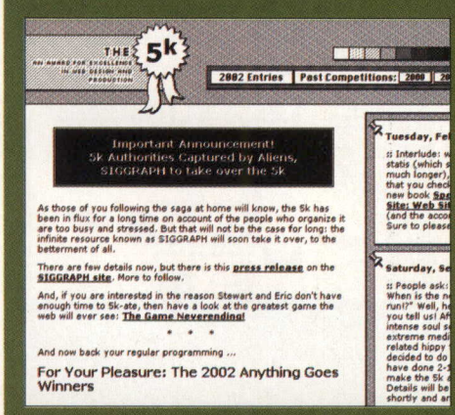
It's also important to consider the fact that not all browser setups will support the bleeding edge of Web technology, and so will have to download and install plug-ins if you use such media. This too takes time, which might dissuade visitors. Consider the last

YOU'VE GONE TOO FAR...

The problem with good advice is that sometimes people take it too much to heart and then wring the life out of it. In terms of the 'optimising your Web pages' maxim, the following sites have all qualified admirably in creating an online experience that loads in seconds. Unfortunately, they all took the idea a little too literally...

Perhaps it's just an experiment in being particularly clever, but the world's smallest Web site (**www.guimp.com**) and its imitators (such as **www.coolornot.com**), are clearly not the best way to optimise your pages. Even if they do load in microseconds, the confounded things are barely a centimetre squared. However, the fastest loading Web site must be awarded to **www.emptywebsite.com**. It's apparent from the URL why this loads faster than the blank default page in Internet Explorer.

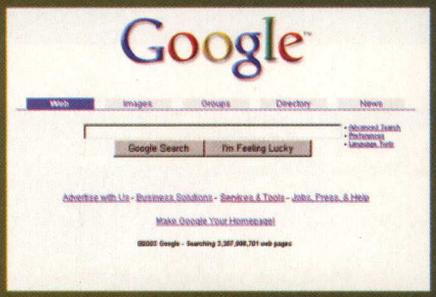
But perhaps the most interesting, obscure and quite frankly pointless collection of inordinately small Web sites has to be found on the 5K Project (**www.the5k.org**). To qualify for the competition, each of the entrants must have created an entire Web site of no more than 5Kb in size. Some of the sites are quite ingenious, and a testament to the fact that it is possible to build something intriguing without resorting to a monster-sized cache of images or scripting chicanery. However, there is a fine line between genius and insanity...



■ If you think you've created an efficient Web site, wait until you see what these folk have done with just 5Kb

PRIME EXPONENTS

THREE FANTASTIC AND FAST-LOADING WEB SITES



GOOGLE

www.google.com

Smart, functional and impressively fast-loading, Google may be a smidgeon light on the niceties of Web design, but you really don't need anything else from a search engine. Only the logo is image-based; all the other elements are generated using HTML.

BBCi

www.BBC.co.uk

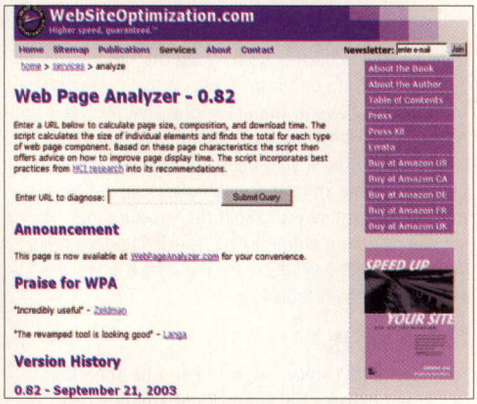
The BBCi portal is a grand example of how you can use blocks of HTML-rendered colour to add visual interest to a site, rather than relying on images. It also loads rather quickly, which is impressive given the wealth of content on the page.

eBAY

www.ebay.co.uk

eBay has a bright and colourful front-end which also loads quickly. But what's more interesting is that it dispenses with any fancy navigation bar. Instead, all the links to the main categories are presented as a straightforward list of text links.

"REMEMBER THIS: IF YOU WOULDN'T WAIT FOR YOUR SITE TO LOAD, DON'T EXPECT YOUR VISITORS TO EITHER"



■ WebSiteOptimization.com (**www.websiteoptimization.com**) will give you a free and complete rundown of the URL you enter and provide recommendations for improving download times

time you went to a site and some Java applet didn't work properly on your computer. Did you try to re-configure your browser to make it work, or did you find another site instead?

FLASHING ABOUT THE PLACE

Macromedia's Flash is without a doubt the most popular and enthralling of all the Web technologies available today, and many sites are emerging that are purely based around Flash. While this does give the Web designer total control over the layout and use of colour and typefaces, it's not an entirely sensible idea. It's much better to include Flash elements within your HTML-based pages. That way you don't have to exclude dial-up users from the more interactive parts of the site.

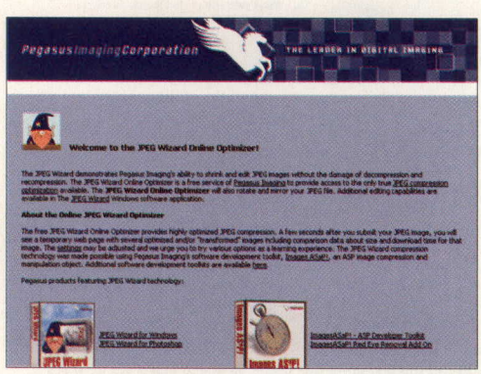
Flash itself is a pretty efficient format, and can be heavily optimised; the problem is not with the technology but the misuse of it – namely the proliferation of splash pages and animations. Nobody likes them. There is no excuse for inflicting this on anyone. Ever.

OTHER CONTRIBUTORY FACTORS

Even if your site pages are slimmer than a rake on the Atkins diet, there's still the uncertainty of other potential bottlenecks on the Net, including the server upon which your site is hosted. Free hosting provided by your ISP may be sufficient for a personal page, but it will soon slow up if traffic starts piling onto it. Other free Web space is not going to fare well either, because these tend to burden pages by throwing on their own advertising banners. So a decent host with a good connection is imperative, especially if you're intent on running broadband-enabled content.

The best thing to do is consistently check your site for speed as you build it. To help you there are a handful of online tools, such as NetMechanic and WebSiteOptimization, which will also take into account speed of your server and other such incidentals. For offline testing, Web authoring applications such as Studio MX and FrontPage will also provide estimated download times for pages as you're building them. Whatever means you choose to squeeze the size out of your site, the principal thing to remember is this: if you wouldn't wait for it, don't expect your visitors to either. ■

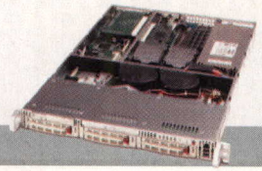
■ While the official Smart Car site (**www.thesmart.co.uk**) uses Flash to good effect, it falls foul of the pointless animated intro



■ An online tool like JPEG Wizard (**www.jpegwizard.com**) or GIF Wizard (**www.gifwizard.com**) will optimise images for you

4DHosting

"People Powered!"



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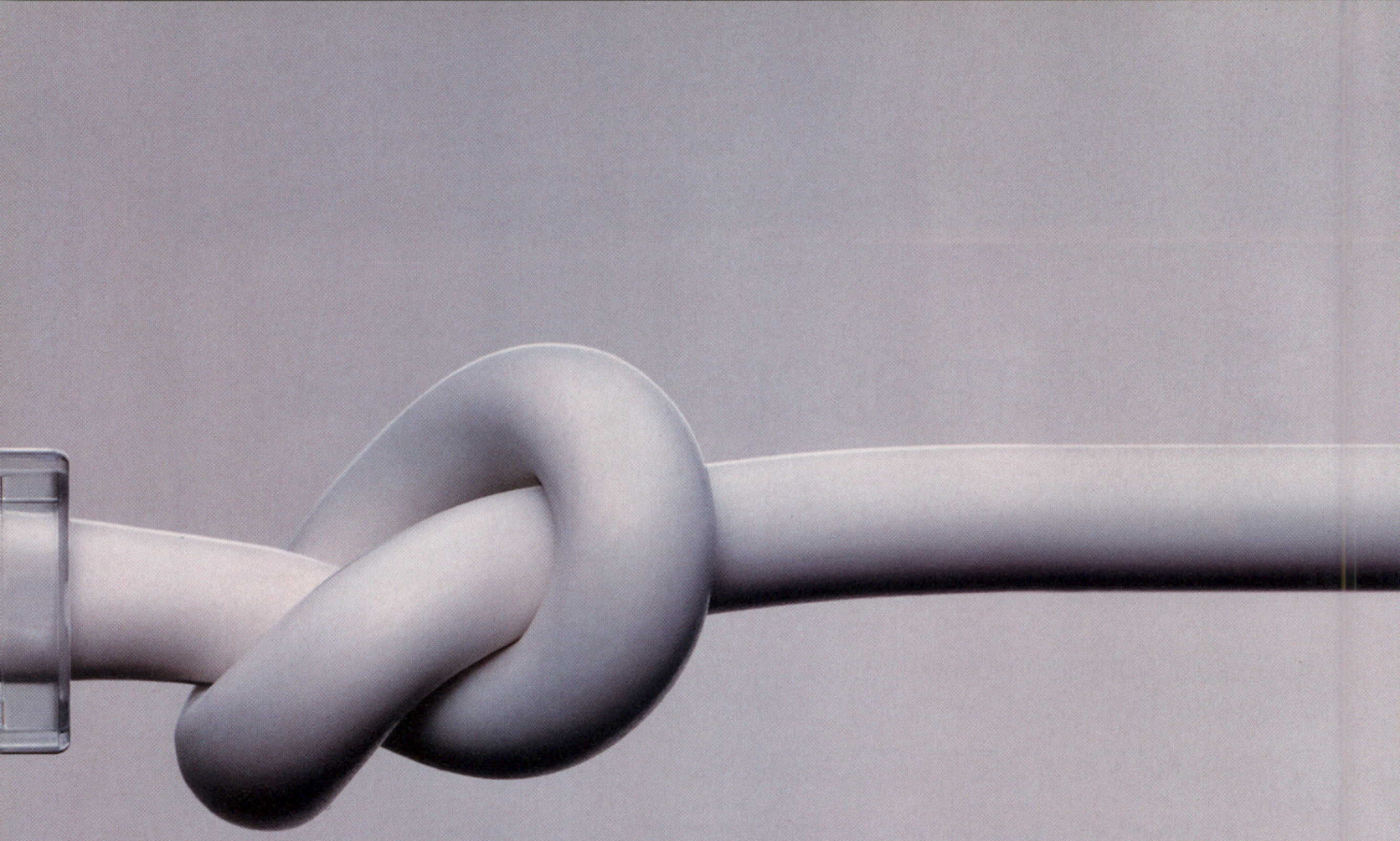

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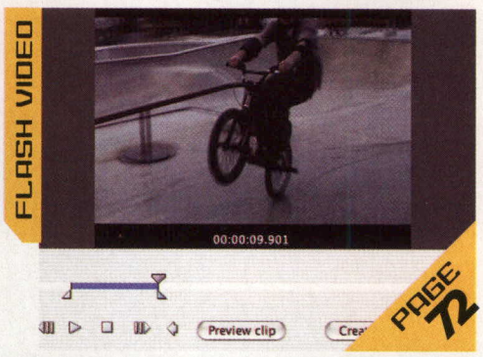

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TUTORIAL: PHOTOSHOP
CREATE AMAZING WEB PAGE BACKGROUNDS

THE EXPERT: JASON ARBER

Jason is Design Director at Green Cathedral Plc and co-creator of Pixelsurgeon, the hugely popular Web portal for designers. With a degree in Photography, Film and Video from the University of Westminster, Jason was an award-winning print designer, before he finally succumbed to the lure of the Net. Check out his work at **www.pixelsurgeon.com**

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CREATE AMAZING WEB PAGE BACKGROUNDS

THE BRIEF

TUTORIAL OBJECTIVE
Create a cool, complex image using layer blending modes in Photoshop

SKILL LEVEL

TIME REQUIRED
Three hours

ON THE DISC
Photoshop/ tutorial files: background.jpg

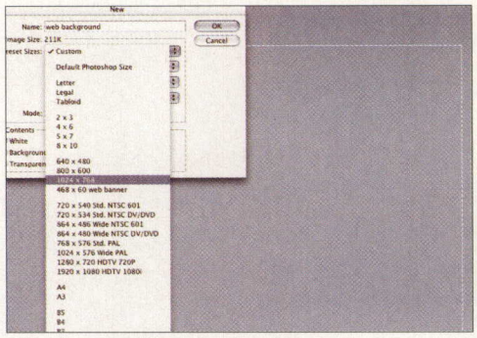
Use Photoshop to create the kind of background image for your Web site that will have people flocking to see your work time and time again

With monitor sizes and the uptake of broadband on the increase, you can afford to be a bit more progressive with the graphics on your Web site, in particular your choice of background image. The days of conserving bandwidth by specifying a background colour or a repeating tile are not entirely gone, but they are definitely numbered.

However, designing large background images presents its own set of problems: do you launch the site in a pop-up window and have clearly defined edges, or do you design the image so that an underlying background tile will seamlessly take over? Your choices depend on what you want to achieve with the look of the site and your target audience. Fans of the band whose site you're designing may be prepared to wait those extra few seconds as your design unfurls, but that complicated background image might be inappropriate for the commerce site that needs to download quickly.

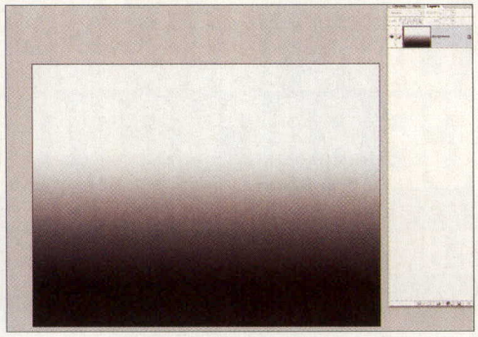
We're going to indulge ourselves and build the kind of image that might not be right for every occasion, but will have us flexing our creative muscles. Our weapon of choice will be Adobe Photoshop, and although we'll occasionally dip into other applications for some vector imagery, with a bit of imagination there's nothing that can't be achieved entirely with Photoshop. ■

TUTORIAL: PHOTOSHOP
CREATE AMAZING WEB PAGE BACKGROUNDS



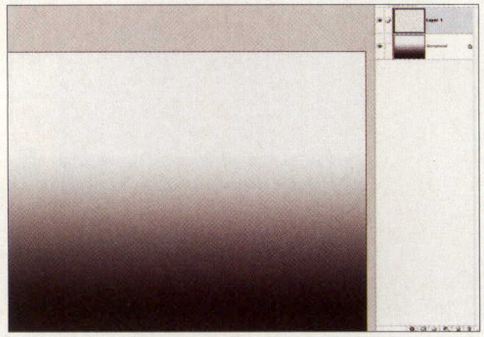
1 CREATING YOUR CANVAS

Set the stage for your artwork by creating a suitably sized canvas area. With Web designers in mind, Adobe has thoughtfully created some presets in the drop-down menu. As monitor sizes increase it becomes safer to go for slightly larger sizes, so throw caution to the wind and go for 1024x768.



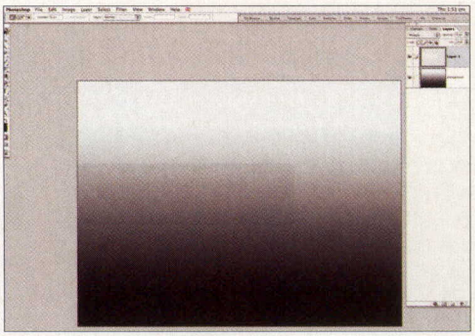
2 USING THE GRADIENT TOOL

With a blank canvas in front of you select a pale, almost white colour for the foreground (see the In Detail boxout) and a dark, inky blue for the background. Using the Gradient tool, drag from top to bottom with the Shift key held down to constrain the angle to a perfect vertical blend.



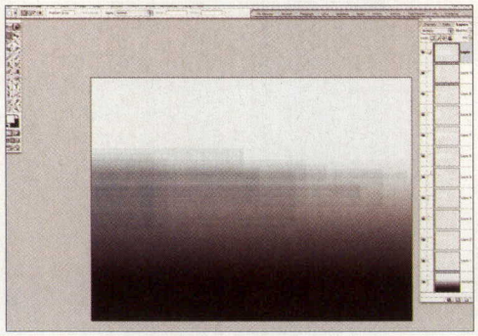
3 NEW LAYER

It's time to create a new layer. Layers are like sheets of acetate stacked up on each other, and keep elements of your artwork independent so you can edit them at a later date. To create a layer, click on the New Document icon at the bottom of the Layers palette.



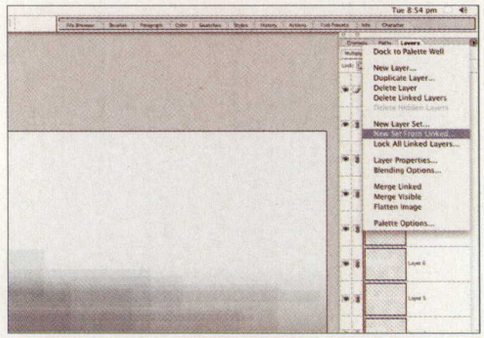
4 USING MULTIPLY

With the new layer selected, use the Rectangular Marquee tool to draw a rectangle and fill it with the pale blue colour you used at the top of your gradient (Edit, Fill). From the big drop-down at the top of the Layers palette, choose Multiply, which darkens the area with transparent colour.



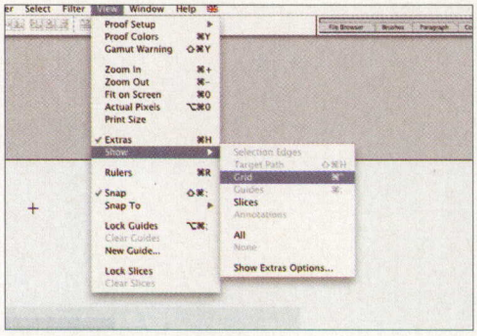
5 BUILDING UP A PATTERN

Repeat the process on new layers with randomly sized rectangles, all filled with the pale foreground colour. As layers are added you can see how the transparency of the Multiply layer mode begins to create an interesting texture from just rectangles.



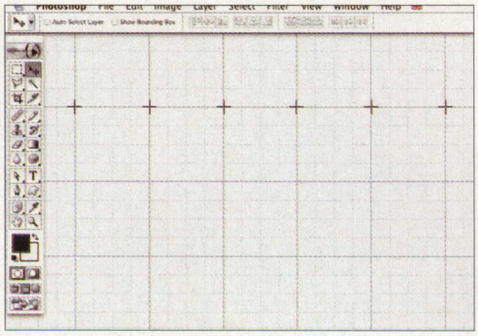
6 KEEPING THINGS UNDER CONTROL

By using individual layers (which you need to do to create the Multiply effect) you can quickly build up a mass of unwieldy layers that are hard to navigate. Photoshop makes it easy to group layers: link the layers you want to group and from the fly-out menu at the top select New Set From Linked.



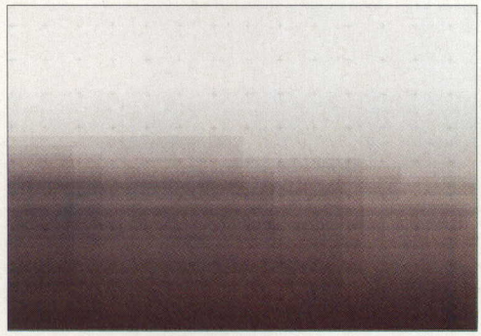
7 USING THE GRID

For the next step we need to turn on Photoshop's Grid. These are guides set at regular intervals horizontally and vertically, which can be used to snap things into place. The intervals can be adjusted in the preferences if you like. Turn the Grid on by selecting View, Show, Grid.



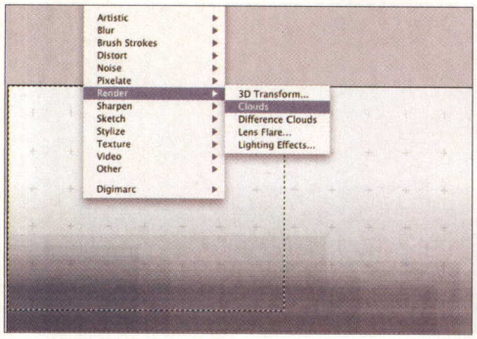
8 CROSSHAIR PATTERN

With a new layer selected and the Grid turned on, use the Pencil tool set to a width of one pixel to draw a small crosshair. Duplicate the crosshair by Option-dragging (Mac) or Alt-dragging (Windows) the shape with the Move tool until it snaps to the large grid lines.



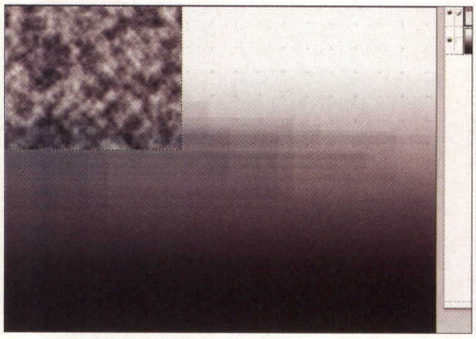
9 QUICK COPYING

Duplicate the crosshairs until you fill a single row. Now link the Crosshair layers and select Merge Linked from the Layer palette fly-out menu. You can now Option-drag (Mac) or Alt-drag (Windows) the whole row to speed up filling the screen with the pattern. At the end, merge all the crosshair layers.



10 CLOUDS

Create a new layer above the Background layer and with the rectangular Marquee tool draw out a rectangle approximately a quarter of the whole image. Fill this area with the Cloud filter, which can be accessed via Filter, Render, Clouds.



11 CLOUDS IN DETAIL

The Cloud filter uses the current foreground and background colours and randomly generated values to render a pattern that sort of resembles summery clouds. You can create a more stark pattern by holding down Alt (Windows) or Option (Mac) as you choose Filter, Render, Clouds.

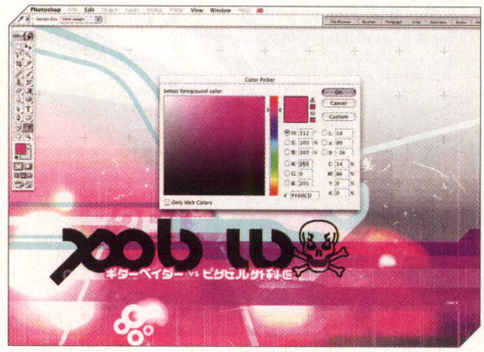
IN DETAIL: CHOOSING COLOUR

How you select colour is a very important part of the illustration process

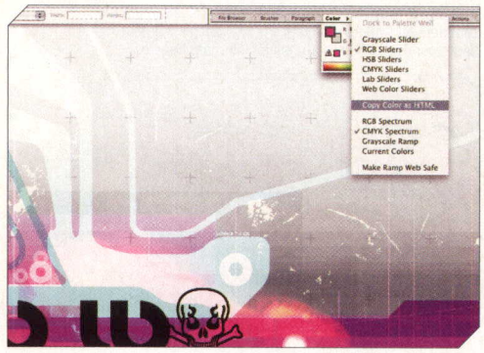
Choosing and editing colours can baffle any Photoshop user, so in this section we'll go back to basics before turning up the complexity. Photoshop has two main colour chips, the foreground and background colours, which are useful for simple gradients and the Cloud Rendering filter, for example. When painting with a brush, you usually paint with the foreground colour. You can change the colour by clicking on a swatch in the Swatch palette or clicking on the main colour chip in the Tool palette (the techniques that follow also apply if you click the background colour).

Having clicked either chip in the Tool palette you'll see the Adobe Colour Picker, containing a large square with gradients of a particular colour, a spectrum and cryptically named acronyms where you can specify colours numerically. Using a combination of the gradient square and the spectrum, you can quickly find roughly the colour you want. Clicking the Only Web Colours checkbox at the bottom of the picker limits the choice to the 216 Web-safe colours, which seem a bit passé now that monitor colour depths have improved and most computers support 24-bit (True Colour) colour depths.

Colours have traditionally been specified for the Web in Hexadecimal – a series of six figures (0-9 and A-F) prefixed by a # symbol. Browsers use Hexadecimal, and Photoshop has a useful feature that lets any foreground colour be copied to the clipboard as an HTML/Hexadecimal combination (simply use the fly-out menu of the Colour palette and select Copy Colour as HTML). Perhaps the most useful acronym is RGB (Red, Green and Blue). It specifies values for each channel from 0-255. ■



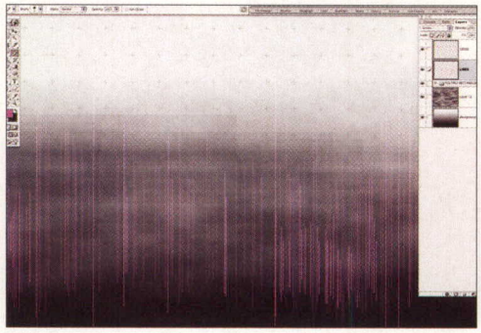
■ Creating your own individual colours in a variety of display formats is a doddle thanks to Photoshop's many colour palette features



■ Once you've found your perfect colour, make sure you save it as a combination of colour and HTML to help your Web design along

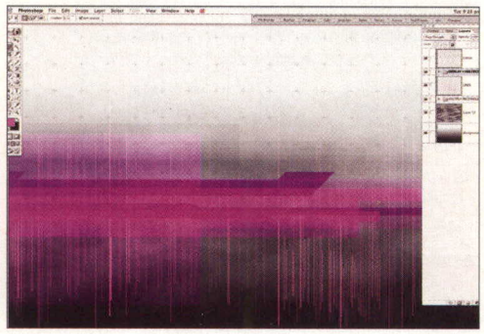
12 USING OVERLAY

Resize the cloud pattern to fill the canvas area (Edit, Transform, Scale). This is to soften the clouds a little. To sink the clouds into the gradient in a subtle way, change the layer mode (using the drop-down menu at the top of the Layer palette) to Overlay and reduce the opacity.



13 DOING LINES

Changing the top colour to a racy pink, use the Pencil tool (accessed by holding down the Brush tool in the Tools palette, if that tool is selected) set to a width of one pixel and start drawing random vertical lines. Hold down the Shift key to constrain the angle.



14 MORE RECTANGLES

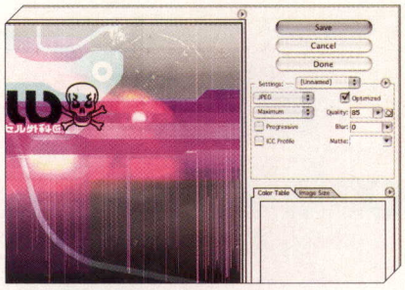
Using the same method you used earlier, start drawing random rectangles filled with the pink colour. Instead of using a Multiply blending mode, use Overlay – but for the hell of it throw in some Multiplied rectangles and shapes as well.

TUTORIAL: PHOTOSHOP
CREATE AMAZING WEB PAGE BACKGROUNDS

TECHNIQUE

SAVE ARTWORK TO THE WEB

In this section we'll show you how to save your artwork in Web-friendly format using Photoshop's built-in Save For Web feature. Although complex solutions are better served by Photoshop's companion app, ImageReady, that's overkill for most artwork and Photoshop will suffice.

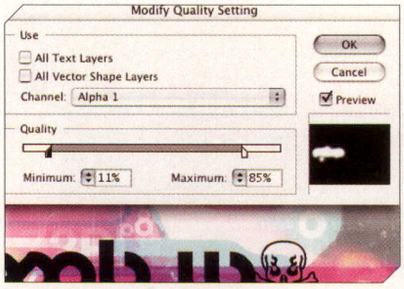


1 PLAIN OL' SAVE FOR WEB

Save For Web (File, Save For Web) is the quick and dirty way to save a file for the Internet. You can choose from a variety of formats (JPEG, GIF and PNG) and determine the compression settings, and that's pretty much it. For large backgrounds you need something with more finesse.

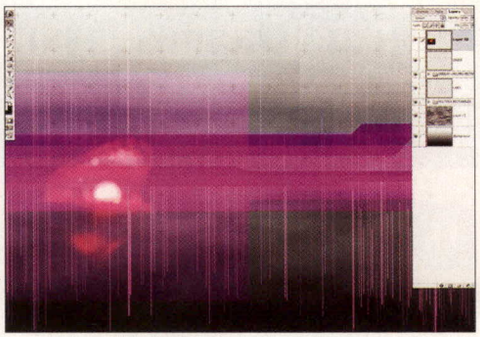
2 SLICE AND DICE

Before you Save For Web you can use the Slice tool to chop your artwork into chunks which can be compressed independently of each other. This means an area with low detail can be heavily compressed and areas of high detail can be given better quality compression.



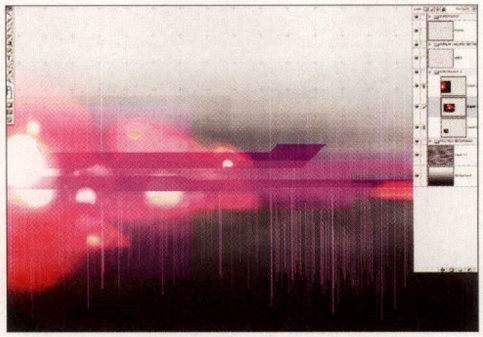
3 USING ALPHA CHANNELS

Although not well known, Alpha channels can help when saving images for the internet. Create a new Alpha channel filled with black, and paint white with a soft-edged brush where you'd like the compression to be lightest. When you Save For Web click the tiny Mask icon next to the Quality slider to bring up the Alpha Channel options.



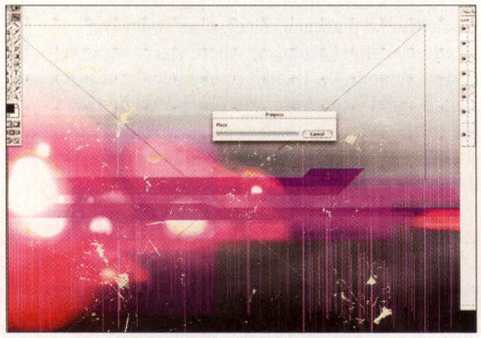
15 DODGY DINOSAUR

Time for something different. We have a small toy dinosaur that has a red bulb in his mouth that lights up when you press his head. In a dark room we took some deliberately blurry shots of this toy with a digital camera and pasted the results into a new layer with the layer mode set to Screen.



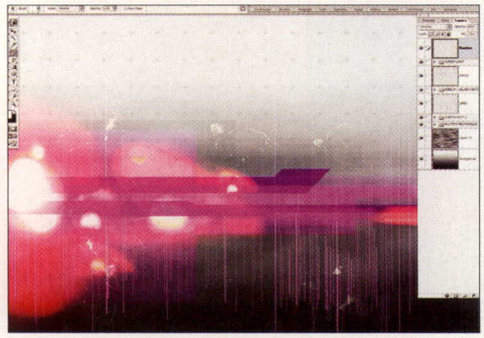
16 USING OVERLAY

Screen is the opposite of Multiply and darker areas become increasingly see-through, with black completely transparent. With different photographs on different layers all set to Screen, you can build up an interesting softly textured background that looks like a nebula.



17 PASTING VECTOR ARTWORK

Like many illustrators and designers, you might have a stock of patterns and textures in vector format, created in Adobe Illustrator or Macromedia Freehand. If you have, dig out something random and paste into Photoshop. Photoshop lets you scale the artwork before rendering, which is useful.



18 ADJUSTING THE VECTOR TEXTURE

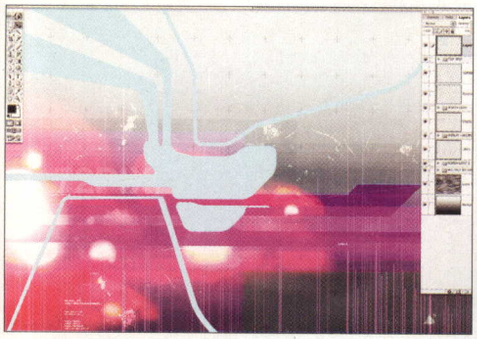
The random artwork can sometimes look too harsh, so use our friend, the Overlay layer mode, to reduce the transparency, perhaps taking the opportunity to adjust the opacity if necessary. Depending on the vector pattern, the result can look like scratches on an old photograph.

19 TINY TEXT

For some reason, tiny, illegible type gives artwork of this nature an enigmatic, pseudo-industrial feel, so go ahead and add some. Although Arial Bold is an acceptable font to use, the real font connoisseur would only use Helvetica Neue 75.

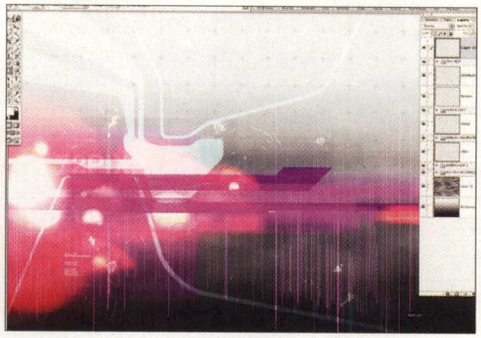
20 BIG TYPE

Just to be different, there's nothing wrong with adding some large text, too. Using Arial or Helvetica again, write something meaningless in white and adjust the opacity in Normal or Screen layer mode so that it's barely visible. The artwork is really starting to come together.



21 MORE VECTORS

By opening up your Photoshop file or a screenshot in Illustrator or Freehand, you can create some custom graphics for your image. The resulting artwork can then be pasted back into Photoshop or imported using the Place command (File, Place...)



22 TWEAK THE OPACITY

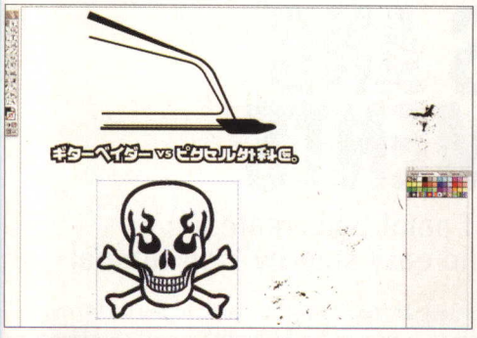
Because the effect of many translucent layers stacked up creates the dense, vibrant effect you want, select a layer mode of Overlay and tweak the opacity until the new vector shape sits in the artwork correctly. You can see the importance of layer management with so many editable layers!

23 GOING BOLD

It's time to make some bold gestures on your artwork by importing strong shapes from your supply of vector shapes and textures (see Step 25). If you don't have any vector shapes you can use fonts. There are plenty of freeware and shareware fonts available on the Net for both shape and texture.

24 TURNING JAPANESE

If you have access to some text in another language, it helps give your artwork a sophisticated sheen of mystery. But it's always a good idea to know what the text says before you publish your artwork on the Web, in case it's highly offensive or inappropriate!



25 RETURN OF THE VECTORS

Time for a quick visit to your vector document created previously or as you go along, containing the last few vector elements to paste into your artwork. It's a good idea to keep files of this type for repeated use on your illustrations. Because they're vectors, they don't take up much disk space.

26 FINAL TWEAKS

Having pasted in the last vectors, now is a good time to appraise your artwork as a whole and adjust the opacity and position of layers or groups of layers. Don't be afraid of removing elements you don't feel work or clutter up the illustration.

GEEK SPEAK

ALPHA CHANNEL

Images are typically made up of one (Greyscale), three (RGB) or four (CMYK) channels, and additional channels in each instance are called Alpha channels. These are greyscale channels saved alongside the normal channels and can be used to create and store masks. They can be loaded into the main document as selections and have many handy uses.

VECTOR IMAGES

Images on computers tend to be one of two kinds: raster images, which are made up of pixels such as the sort of image you might create using Photoshop, or vector images which are made up of line and curves defined by mathematical points and are often created in applications such as Adobe Illustrator or Macromedia Freehand. The main advantage of vectors is that they are resolution-independent so they can be scaled up or down with no loss of detail.

YOUR NEXT MOVE

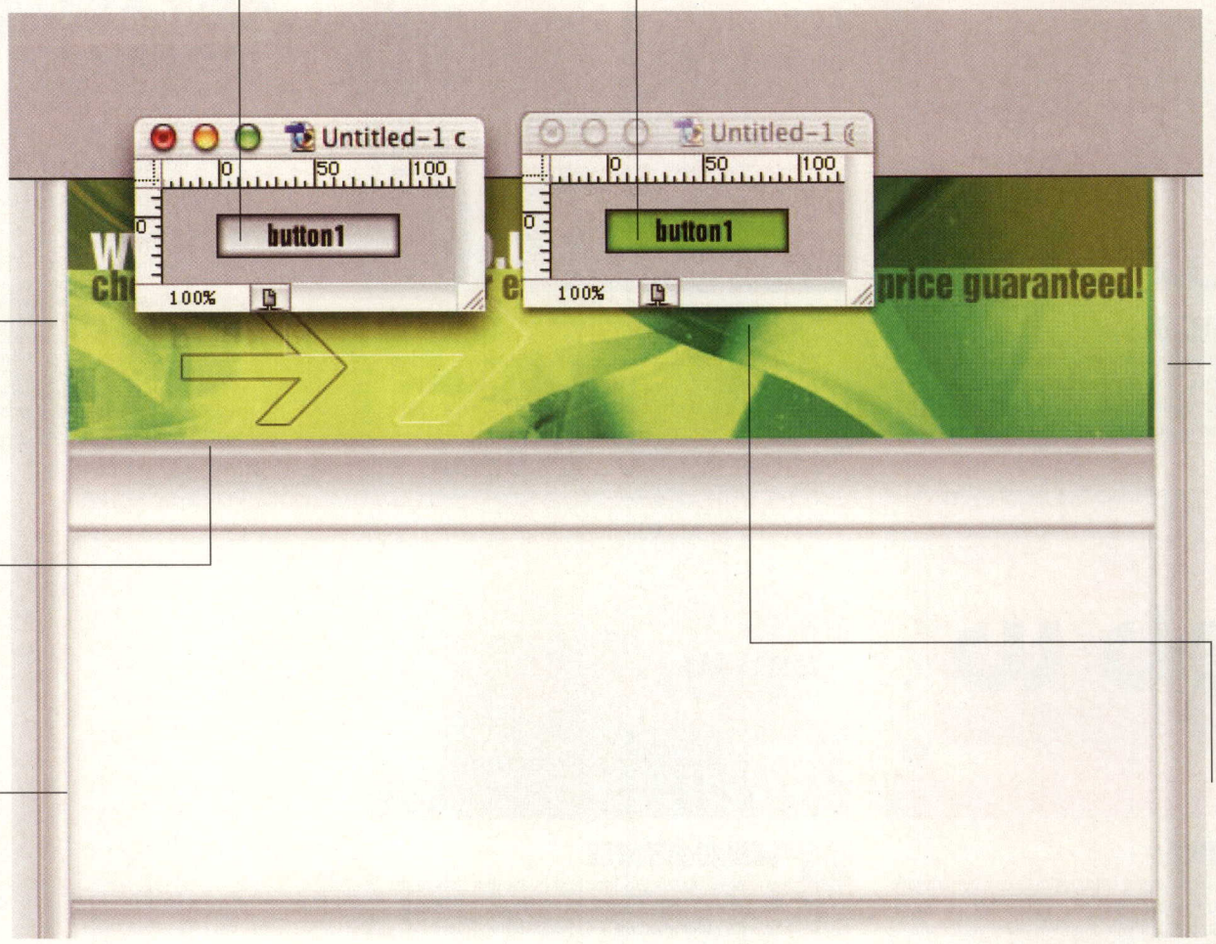
START EXPLORING

Having explored in detail how important layer modes are for building up depth and detail, you should look at exploring other aspects of Photoshop, such as layer styles, which are also covered in this issue. Perhaps the most interesting and fruitful area of experimentation is looking at how you can use Photoshop in relationship with other applications such as ImageReady, vector applications and Macromedia Flash MX. It's virtually impossible to use 3D applications and creative moving image programs such as Adobe After Effects without putting Photoshop at the centre of the workflow hub. Don't copy other people's designs and illustrations, but try and work out how certain effects were achieved and incorporate them into your own work.

TUTORIAL: PHOTOSHOP
CREATE BUTTONS AND NAVIGATION ELEMENTS

THE EXPERT: MARK SHUFFLEBOTTOM

Mark teaches on the BA Hons Interactive Media course at Bournemouth University, and has been a regular contributor to *Practical Internet Web Designer* for many issues. Although Mark comes from a print background – he is a former designer of *PI* – he is now much more involved in Web design technology, and specialises in everything from Flash design through to 3D graphics and PHP.



THE BRIEF

TUTORIAL OBJECTIVE
Create a style in Photoshop for your site buttons and interface

SKILL LEVEL

TIME REQUIRED
20 minutes

ON THE DISC
Photoshop/Tutorial files: finished [folder] template.psd

CREATE BUTTONS AND NAVIGATION ELEMENTS

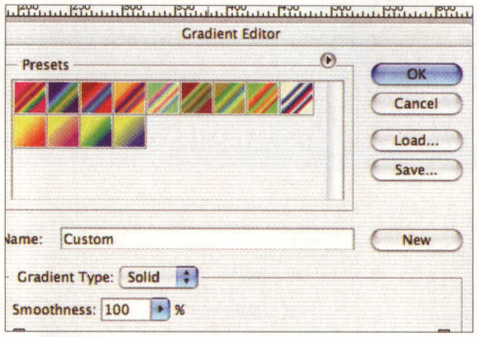
Use Photoshop to give your Web site a lick of paint and create a brand new look with the help of our quick and easy step-by-step tutorial

Creating buttons for your site can be fun, but you also need to create a style that can be applied to the entire navigational interface and will fit in with the rest of your site. This can be daunting as everything should work together, and trying to take into account how your content and header will fit in with your button can be quite tricky.

In this tutorial we'll tackle this head on, armed only with the Gradient tool, the Layer Styles and the humble Rectangle Marquee Selection tool, and hopefully show you how easy the job can be. The elements will be used in our tutorial on page 46, where the images will be reassembled in Dreamweaver to create a template.

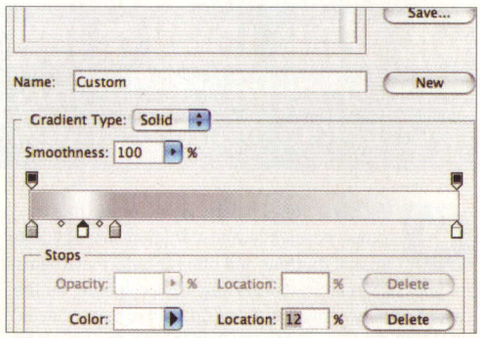
The interface has been kept a simple grey and white, as this usually works well with other colours and is neutral enough not to interfere with the content you add later. White is considered the easiest colour to read from on screen, so with this as your background colour you're halfway to creating accessible content. ■

TUTORIAL: PHOTOSHOP
CREATE BUTTONS AND NAVIGATION ELEMENTS



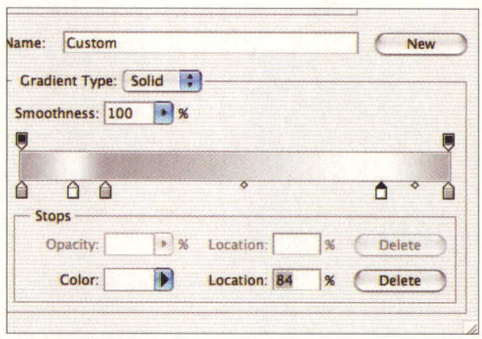
1 STARTING THE PROJECT

From the cover CD open the file template.psd, as this will be a guide to help create the navigational elements and develop the style of the site. Click the Gradient tool then click the gradient on the context menu at the top of Photoshop. A pop-up window will appear so you can edit the gradient.



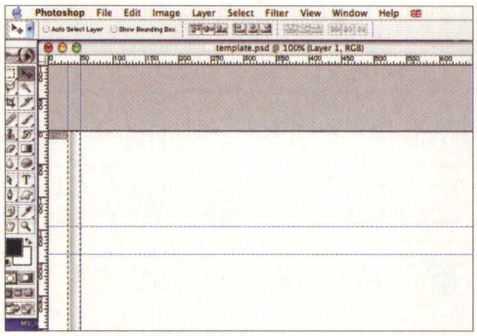
2 EDIT THE GRADIENT

Change the colour of each end so the left is grey and the right is white. Click the colour cube below the gradient and select the colour from the square below that to change the colours. Click just under the gradient to add two more colour markers and make the second from the left white.



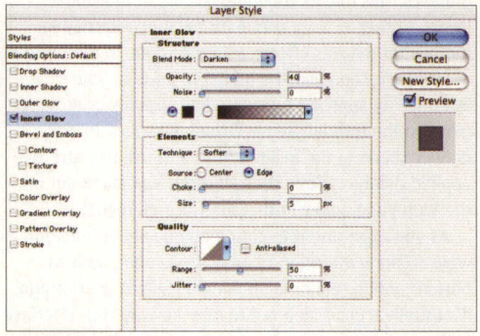
3 ADD MORE TINTS

Drag the white square in from the right-hand side a little then click under the gradient to add another colour stop. Change this to grey, similar to the other side. Now click OK to return to your document, create a new layer in the Layer palette and select the Marquee tool.



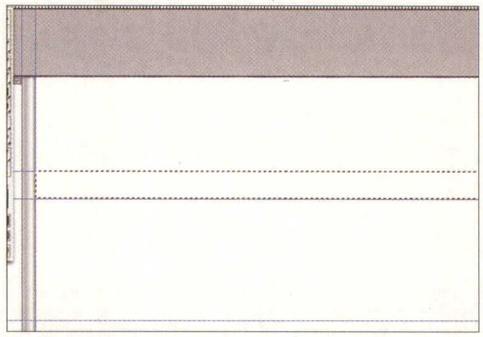
4 FILL THE GRADIENT

Drag inside the guides on the left to select with the Marquee, then change to the Gradient tool and drag from left to right to apply the gradient to the shape. Press Control & D on PC or Apple & D on Mac to deselect the area. Now double-click the layer to open the Layer Styles window.



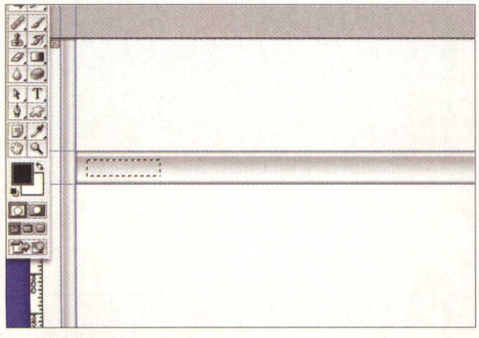
5 LAYER STYLE

Click the Inner Glow option and change the Blend mode to Darken with a 40% opacity, making sure the colour is black, then click OK to leave. From the Layer menu, choose Layer Style and Copy Layer Style, as most of the interface elements we create will be based on this.



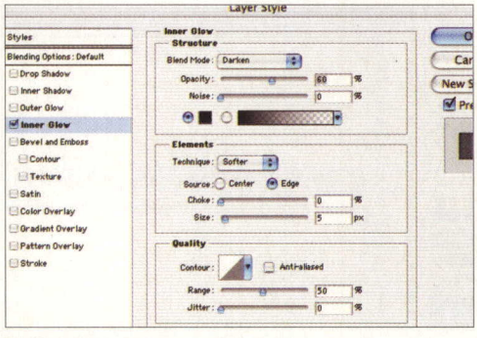
6 COPY THE LAYER

Drag Layer 1 to the New Layer icon in the Layer palette to copy it. Move the new layer to the guides on the right and choose Edit, Transform, Rotate 180° to flip it. Now create a new layer in the Layer palette and use the Marquee tool to select the the area as shown in the screenshot above.



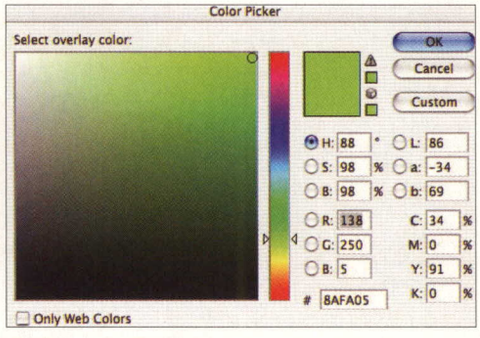
7 FILL AND STYLE

Select the Gradient tool and drag from top to bottom of the selection. Now deselect it as in step 4. From the Layer menu choose Layer Style and Paste Layer Style to apply to this layer. Choose the Marquee tool, select the area as shown on screen and copy with Control & C or Apple & C.



8 A NEW DOCUMENT

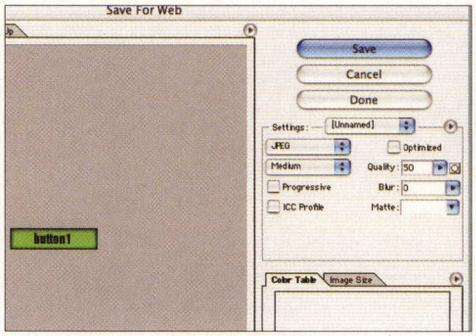
Create a new document; it should automatically be the size of your selection. Paste the gradient into your document with Control & V or Apple & V. From the Layer menu choose Layer Style and Paste Layer Style. Double-click the layer to amend the style and increase the opacity of the glow to 60%.



9 DUPLICATE LAYER

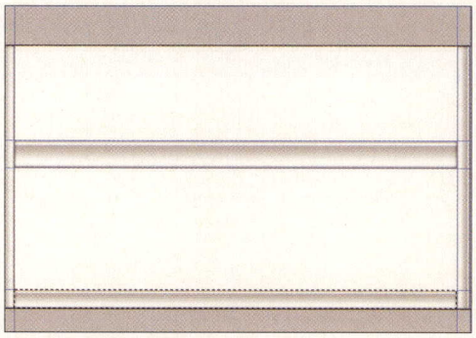
Use the Text tool to add appropriate button text, and choose File, Save For Web. Save the button as a JPEG with 50% quality as 'button-up.jpg'. Now duplicate the Gradient layer by dragging it to the New Layer icon in the Layers palette. Add the Colour Overlay options as shown above and click OK.

TUTORIAL: PHOTOSHOP
CREATE BUTTONS AND NAVIGATION ELEMENTS



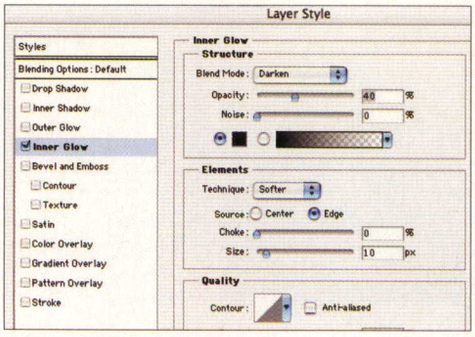
10 SAVE AND SAVE FOR WEB

Save the image for Web, naming it 'button-over.jpg' with the same settings as before. Save the file as a Photoshop document, named 'button.psd'. To make more buttons, just amend the text and toggle the visibility of the green Gradient layer to create a normal button and a rollover button.



11 ANOTHER BAR

Switch back to the template.psd file and press Control & D or Apple & D to deselect the selection. Create a new layer, select the area between the sidebars at the bottom of the document and fill with the Gradient tool, dragging from top to bottom. Now paste the layer style as before.



12 A SOFT EDGE

With the Marquee tool select the white section in the lower centre of the image. Create a new layer and use the Paint Bucket tool to fill it with white. Paste the layer style. Now double-click the layer to open the Layer Styles window and increase the size of the Inner Glow to 8 pixels.

IN DETAIL: LEARN TO LOVE LAYERS

Layer styles can be used to make the blandest of layers stand out, and are ideal for interfaces

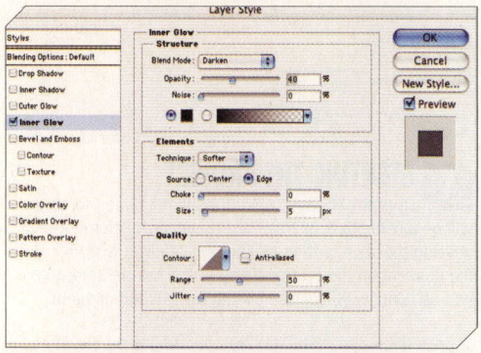
The Layer Styles palette is one of the most comprehensive features of Photoshop if you're creating buttons and other interface elements for your site. Double-clicking any layer will bring up the Layer Styles window. Here you can add complex bevel effects like those used by Apple to create the Aqua interface buttons that have been copied on countless sites. Metallic effects can be created with ease that could really only be done by high-end 3D graphics apps which are way out of the budget of most Web designers.

Layers can have textures, gradients and colours applied to fit exactly with the transparent edge of the graphics. This makes changing colours of individual layers a breeze – very useful for creating alternative buttons for rollover effects, as we've done in the tutorial.

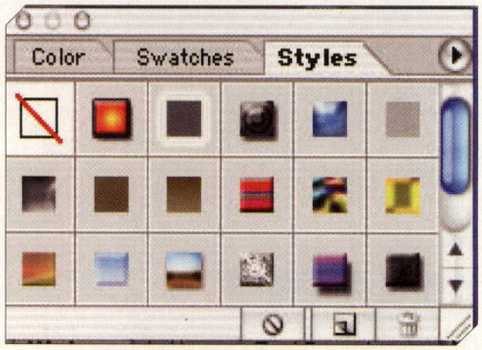
Emphasis can easily be added to parts of your interface by applying a simple drop shadow or an inner glow. In the tutorial we used the inner glow to add a deeper shade to the inside of the buttons. Because we applied a darker glow, these buttons will stand out on the Web page against other interface elements.

As you experiment to create unique styles, look for ways to draw attention to areas that count, such as buttons, while retaining an overall style to your design. It's usually a good idea not to mix the way your interface looks, as this may give the impression you're showing off how many ways you can use the Layer Styles!

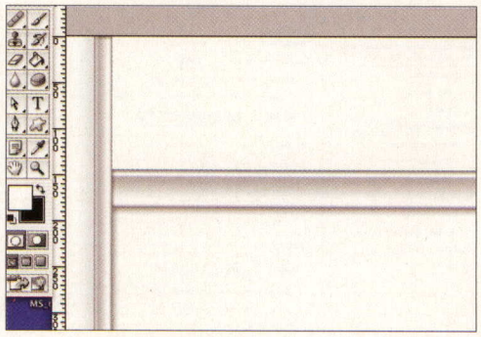
Any style you create can be copied/pasted between layers – or why not save your style so you can select it from the Styles palette when you need it? This gives a consistent look when working in different documents. ■



■ The Layer Styles dialog box is not only incredibly complex, but it also makes it very easy to create amazing effects in no time



■ Access the built-in styles via the relevant palette in Photoshop. You can even create your own styles, which are stored here as well



13 A NEW GRADIENT

Make a simple gradient from grey to white, then add a new layer and blend the edge of the left bar to the edge of the page. Copy this layer, and from the Edit menu choose Transform and Rotate 180°. Position this new layer on the opposite side of the document next to the right-hand bar.

14 FINISHING TOUCHES

All that's left now is to add a suitable image at the top of the interface plus appropriate header text – and that completes creating your navigational elements and rollover buttons. This needs to be saved as individual images and can be reassembled in Dreamweaver: see our tutorial on page 46.

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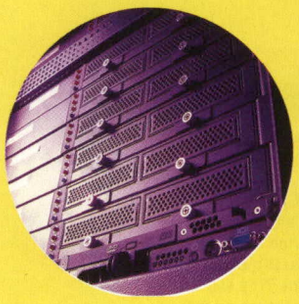

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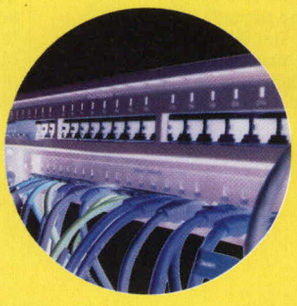

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TUTORIAL: DREAMWEAVER

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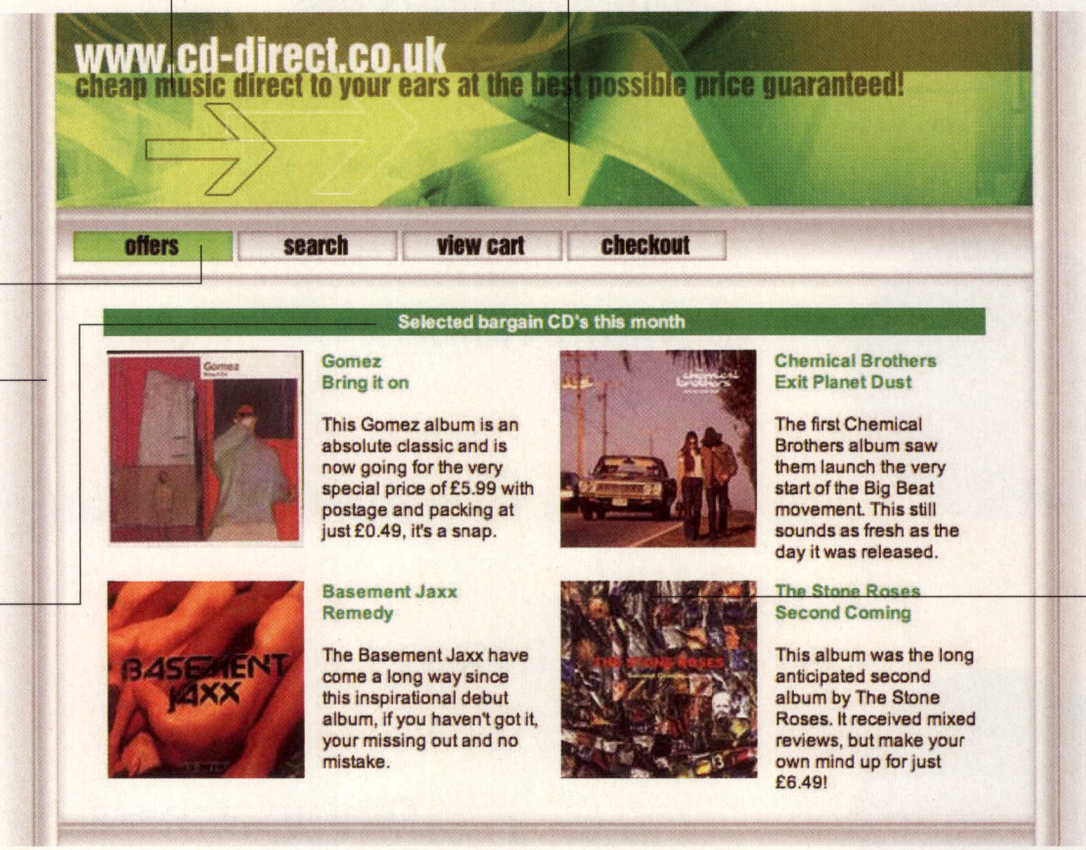
THE EXPERT: MARK SHUFFLEBOTTOM

Mark teaches on the BA Hons Interactive Media course at Bournemouth University, and has been a regular contributor to *Practical Internet Web Designer* for many issues. Although Mark comes from a print background – he is a former designer of *PI* – he is now much more involved in Web design technology, and specialises in everything from Flash design through to 3D graphics and PHP.



THE BRIEF

TUTORIAL OBJECTIVE
Use Dreamweaver MX 2004 to create page templates

SKILL LEVEL

TIME REQUIRED
40 minutes

ON THE DISC
Dreamweaver/ Tutorial files: starting files [folder] finishing files [folder]

CREATE PAGE TEMPLATES FOR EASIER SITE MANAGEMENT

Creating a set of propper page templates will save you time in the long run. We show you how to build your own templates, then design a site around them

Have you ever built a good Web page and thought: "I can base another page on this," only to forget to use the Save As option? If you're creating a lot of pages based on the same design or if there will be common features on every page, you need to take advantage of Dreamweaver's templates. These time-saving delights will cut your work in half – after all you don't want to create the heading, background, font details and CSS for every page you make.

Dreamweaver can also lock sections down – useful if you're passing your design on to someone else to fill in content. Multiple regions can be left unlocked, so you could allow navigation elements to be unlocked if you have a drill-down navigation system, while still allowing other content regions to be editable.

In the tutorial we'll create a page that will have a content area unlocked for pages to be added, but we'll leave this area blank so subsequent pages can be formatted based on individual content. ■

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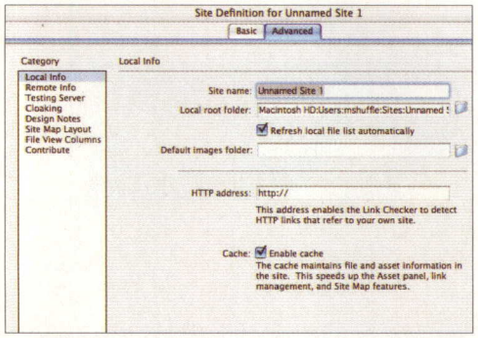
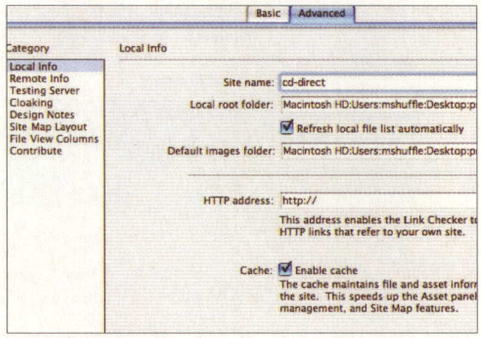


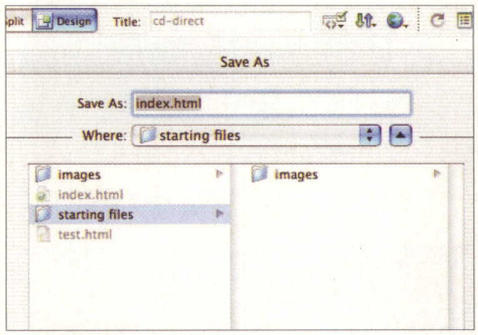
1 SETTING UP THE PROJECT

From the cover CD, drag the 'Starting Files' folder from the Project folder onto your computer desktop or Documents folder. Now start Dreamweaver and select Dreamweaver Site from the Welcome menu under the Create New option. Click on the Advanced tab at the top of the window.



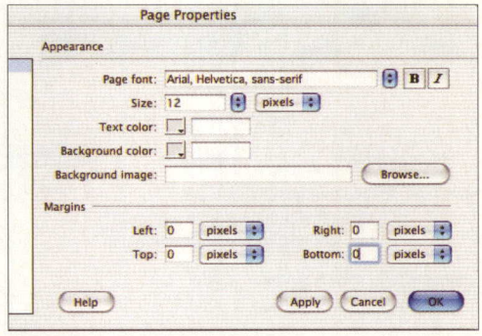
2 DEFINE THE SITE

Name the site 'CD-direct' in the appropriate text box, and for the Local Root Folder option, click the Folder icon and browse for the folder you copied to your computer in the last step. Click the Folder icon for the Default Images folder, browse inside the Local Root folder and pick the Images folder.



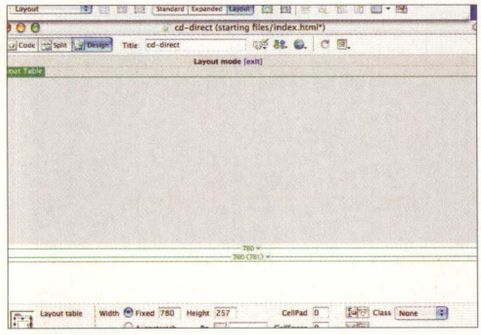
3 CREATE THE PAGE

Click OK to leave the Site Definition, then click HTML under the Create New option in the main Dreamweaver menu. Give the page the title of 'CD-direct' and then save the page as 'index.html' from the File menu. Make sure this is saved in the folder that you defined as your site folder.



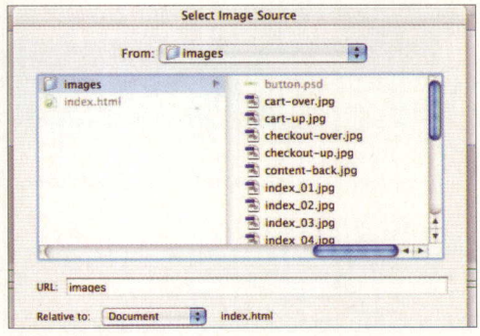
4 PAGE PROPERTIES

From the Modify menu choose Page Properties and a pop-up window will appear. Change the default font to Arial, Helvetica, sans-serif with a size of 12 pixels. Below that you will see some margin boxes. Make sure you enter a zero for each of the margins, then click OK to return to your page.



5 LAYOUT MODE

In the Insert panel along the top, click the drop menu marked Common and change it to Layout. Now hit the Layout button on the Insert menu to change the Design mode. Select the Layout Table icon from the Insert panel and draw a rectangle. Change the width to 780 in the Properties palette.



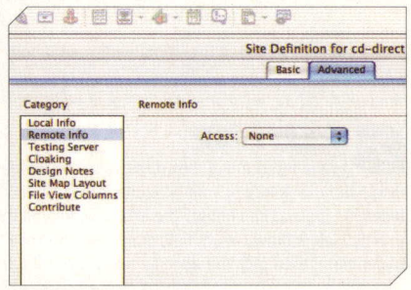
6 DRAW A CELL

Change to the Draw Layout Cell tool on the Insert panel and draw a cell flush to the top of the table for the entire width of the table. Select the edge of the cell and change its height in the Properties palette to 128 pixels. Now place the cursor in the cell and select the Insert menu and Insert image.

TECHNIQUE

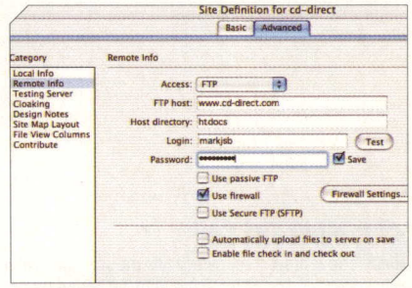
DREAMWEAVER SITE MANAGEMENT

You need to tell Dreamweaver where your site is so it can perform tasks like site-wide name changes and displaying assets such as the colour scheme. It also has a more secure FTP client to upload the site to your Web space with less fuss.



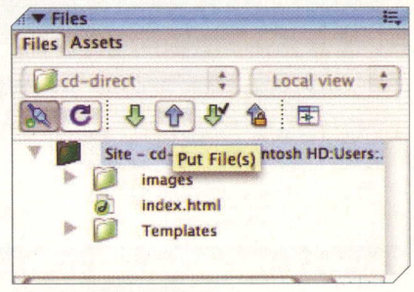
1 EDIT YOUR SITE

To add your FTP details to Dreamweaver you'll need to choose Manage Sites from the Sites menu. In the Manage Sites window, choose the site you wish to edit then click the Edit button. Once the Site Definition window opens, select the Remote Info category from the Category list on the left.



2 ADD FTP DETAILS

Change Access from None to FTP. You can then enter the details of your Web space including host, directory, login and password. The test button allows you to make sure the details are correct, and this will invoke your dial-up connection. New settings enable you to keep your firewall up when uploading.



3 UPLOAD YOUR SITE

Click OK to leave the site definition and then Done to leave the Site Management window. From the Window menu select Files, and in the Files palette click the Connect button. Now select the files you want to upload and click the blue Put Files arrow, which will upload your files to your Web server.

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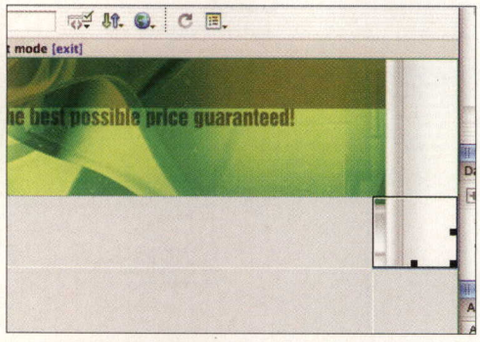
7 INSERT IMAGE

In the Insert Image box, browse to the Images folder inside the root folder of your Web site, select the image index_01.jpg and hit Choose. The image should fill the cell exactly. Select Draw Layout Cell, draw a square cell underneath, then click the edge to select the cell's properties.

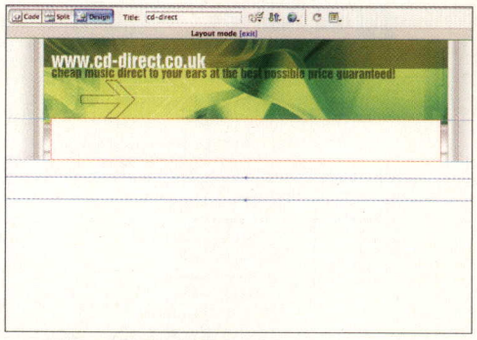
8 CHANGE THE CELL SIZE

In the Properties palette resize the cell to 78 by 66 pixels. Place the cursor in the cell and choose Image from the Insert menu. Select the image index_02.jpg and click Choose; again the image should fit the cell. Select the Draw Layout Cell icon and draw a cell on the right of the page.



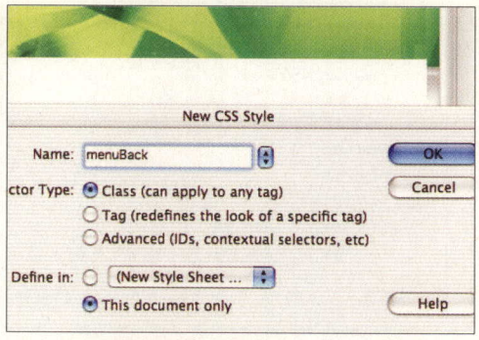
9 EDIT AND MOVE

Select the cell and change the width to 79 pixels, then pick the cell up by grabbing the edge (but not a handle) and move it so the cell is flush with the right-hand edge of the table. Position the cursor inside the cell and add the image index_04.jpg. As before, this will fill the cell.



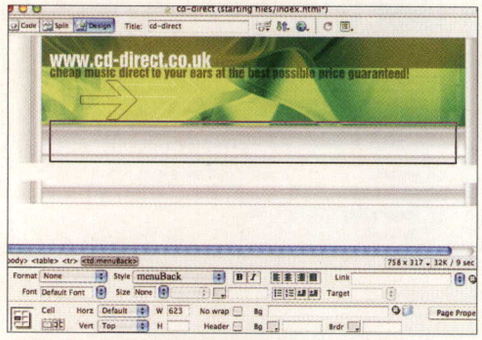
10 MIND THE GAP

Now draw a cell which fills the space between the cells on either side of the page. Directly below them draw a cell that covers the exact width of the table; the height of this cell is unimportant at the moment. Now draw one more cell the entire width of the table, making this 35 pixels high.



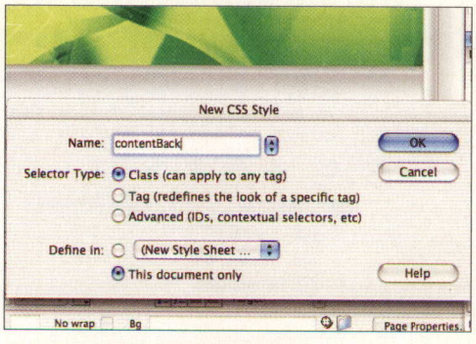
11 ADD AN IMAGE

Place your cursor in the bottom cell and insert the image named index_06.jpg from the Images folder. Click the Exit button at the top of the document to leave Layout mode. Hit the New Style icon in the CSS Style palette. In the pop-up, name the style 'menuBack' and change the options as shown.



12 CSS BACKGROUND

Click OK and select the Background category in the next window. Browse for the image index_03.jpg as the background image and click OK. Select the cell between the two edge cells and choose the <td> tag from the bottom of the document. In the Properties palette alter the style to 'menuBack'.

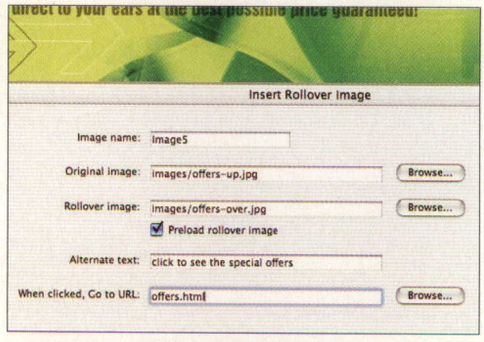


13 CHANGE THE ALIGNMENT

In the Properties palette change the vertical alignment to middle then select the cell immediately below this. In the Properties palette select the height and remove the number, so no height is fixed. Create a new CSS style and name it 'contentBack', making sure all details are as above.

14 STYLISH YET ATTAINABLE

Click OK and select the Background category. Browse for the image index_05.jpg as the background image and change the Repeat option to Repeat. Click OK to create. Click inside the last cell without any content, choose the <td> tag then change the style to 'contentBack' in the Properties panel.



15 CREATE THE NAVIGATION

Position the cursor in the grey bar under the main headline of the page. Change the Insert menu back to Common and select the Rollover Image option from under the Image icon. Browse for offers-up.jpg and offers-over.jpg for the various states and fill in the other details as shown above.

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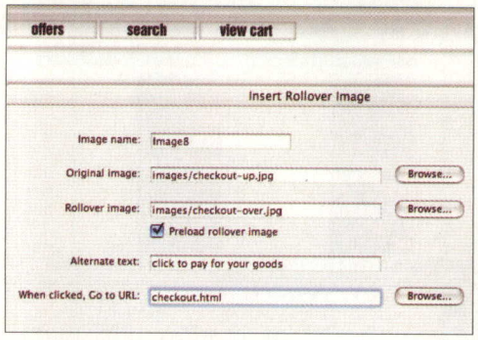
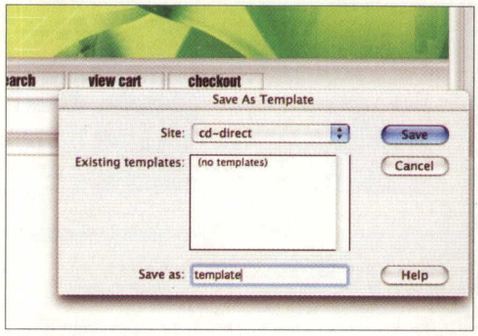


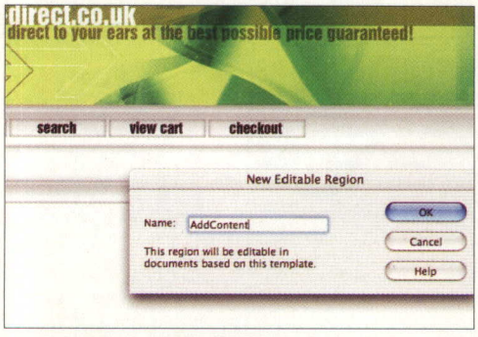
16 ADD MORE BUTTONS

Repeat the previous step, adding rollover buttons for search-up.jpg, cart-up.jpg and checkout-up.jpg with the appropriate over images as the rollover. Add links to HTML pages and an alternative text description to make the button accessible. Add a space between each image with the spacebar.



17 CREATE THE TEMPLATE

Select the main table and change the alignment to Centre, then save the file. From the File menu choose Save As Template. In the pop-up window, be sure to save the template under your CD-direct site so you can access it again. Give it the name 'Template' and click the Save button.



18 MAKE AN EDITABLE REGION

Select the cell below the menu and centre your text in the Properties palette. From the Insert menu choose Template Objects and Editable Region. In the pop-up window name the Edit Region 'AddContent' and click OK. Now when you create a site from this template you'll be able to add content to this cell.

IN DETAIL: INTEGRATED CSS

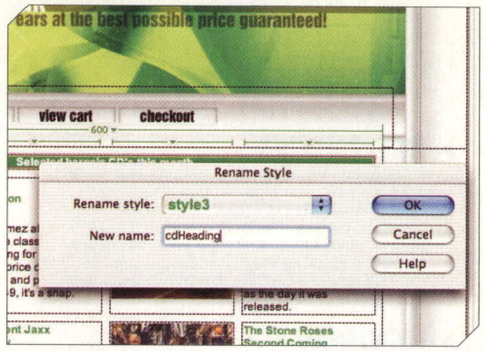
Learn how to use one of the newest additions to Dreamweaver – integrated Cascading Style Sheets

When Tim Berners-Lee first thought up the Web in 1990, it was merely to share documents with colleagues at the research lab CERN, so they could have easy access to their work, share findings with each other and gain a company-wide perspective. The pages were never intended to look good or even be designed, but with the swift adoption of the Web that followed it became clear that this was necessary.

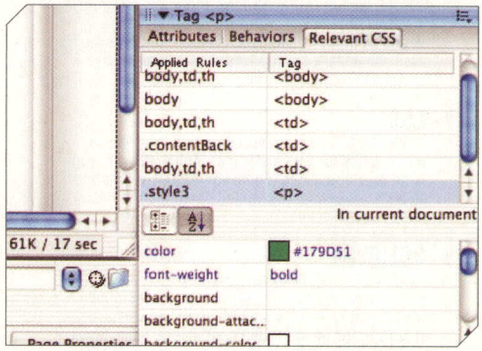
As HTML was never created as a design package but a simple way of marking up text similar to the old DOS word processors, it fell far short of the task. Tim Berners-Lee was quick to admit this, and by the late Nineties the W3C had come up with Cascading Style Sheets to provide a more flexible approach to designing Web pages.

Dreamweaver has supported CSS for a long time, but the new outing of Dreamweaver 2004 integrates it and almost does away with the old HTML text size tags. This integration of CSS is present from when you modify your page and set up the text, as this is recorded as the new <body> tag to replace the standard HTML tag. Every text change you make is recorded as a new style, which lets you quickly and easily style other elements on the page. These can be renamed, so you're not stuck with style1, style2, etc. Giving them names such as subheading or sideheading makes it easier to apply that style later. The Tag Inspector now gives you relevant CSS style options to keep you working with this more detailed design method.

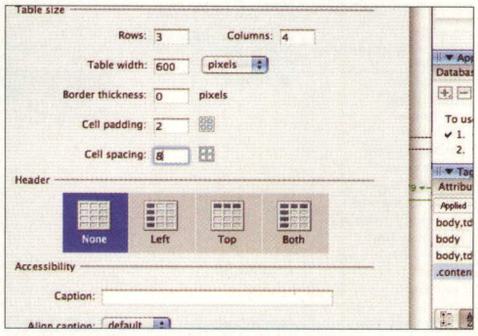
There is still the excellent CSS palette for creating new styles with much more detail, and you can apply CSS style from such diverse elements as jump menus, input boxes on forms and table cells. ■



■ If you're going to come back to a CSS style later (and that's the whole point of them), you can do a lot worse than renaming them

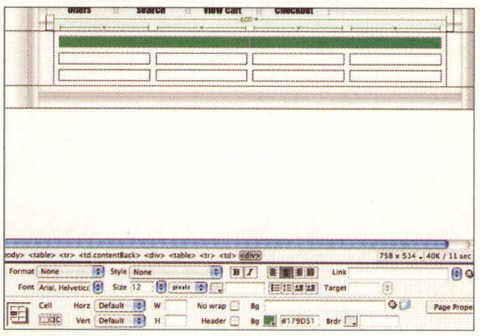


■ The improved CSS functionality in Dreamweaver MX 2004 means that you now have more control over CSS than ever before



19 SAVE THE TEMPLATE

Save your template by pressing Control & S on a PC or Apple & S on a Mac. Close your template and open the index.html page again. Place your cursor in the cell below the menu items, then centre the text. From the Insert panel add a table and fill in the details as shown above.



20 MERGE CELLS

The table we have added will contain the content for this page. Select the first cell and drag the mouse across the top row of cells so they all become selected. From the Modify menu, choose Table and Merge Cells. In the Properties palette change the background colour to green and centre the text.

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GEEK SPEAK

LOCAL ROOT FOLDER

This is the folder which will contain every file of your Web site. Don't have links to any pages or media outside the Local Root folder in your Web site, otherwise when you upload, the files or pages will be missing. It's generally considered a good idea to structure your Local Root folder so that you have an Images folder to keep them separate from your pages, making finding your pages much simpler. If you are using other media, you may wish to have a Media folder that will contain the relevant files. Good organisation makes it easier to find and edit files later.

PAGE PROPERTIES

Dreamweaver MX allows you to edit your page so that if necessary you can change the background colour, add background images, change the fonts and the margins of the page. This information is saved as a Cascading Style Sheet, so more detail can be taken; for example, background images can remain static and not scroll with your page like the content. This is ideal when used with watermark logos.

LAYOUT MODE

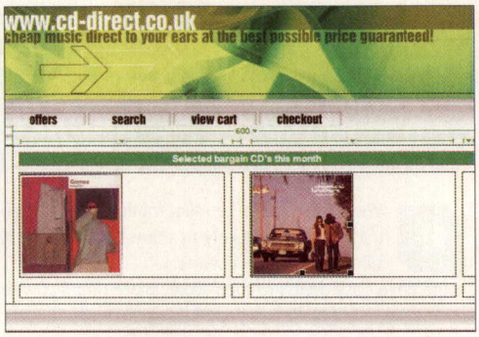
One of Dreamweaver's strengths has been the ability to draw your tables and the relevant cells that you want to fill them with directly on the page. This gives a huge amount of precision and control to designers, and makes designing Web pages much more like designing printed pages. The details of the cells can easily be modified in the Properties palette to give you pixel precision for your page design.

CSS

CSS is the abbreviation for Cascading Style Sheets, and it refers to extra style that can be added to your page over and above the standard HTML formatting. There is a much more detailed description of this in the In Detail section.

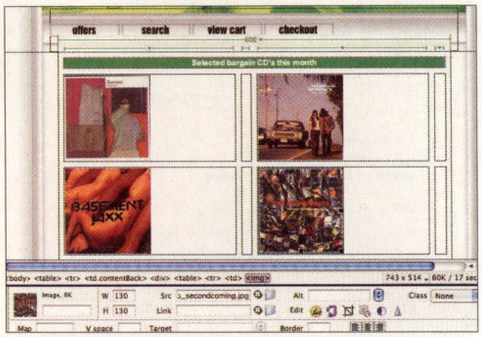
ROLLOVER

A rollover is a series of two images placed on the page – although only one is ever visible. When the mouse rolls over the image, JavaScript powers a change in the image so the original disappears but is replaced by the other image. By making two slightly different images this becomes a powerful form of feedback to the visitors of your site, as they can easily identify areas that are clickable.



21 ADD IMAGES

Add text to the top row of the table and change the colour to white and bold. Then position your cursor in the first cell below this row and add the image so_bringiton.jpg. Now position your cursor in the third cell of the row and add the image so_exitplanetdust.jpg, as shown above.



22 MORE IMAGES

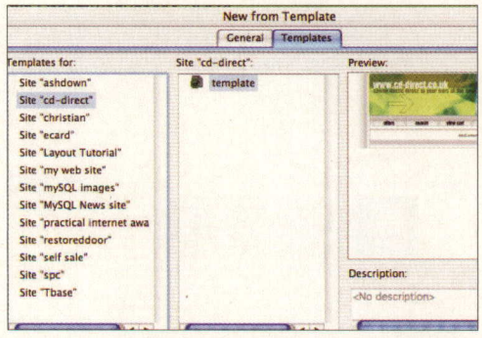
Place your cursor in the cell with so_bringiton.jpg and drag it to the bottom right cell to select the cells. Now change the vertical alignment to Top in the Properties palette. Add the images so_remedy.jpg and so_secondcoming.jpg to the cells as shown in the screenshot above.

23 COPY THE TEXT

From the image shown above, copy the text into the appropriate cells of the table. After completing this, highlight the first heading and make it bold, changing the colour to green. You will notice that the style has automatically been saved as 'style3' on the Styles in the Properties palette.

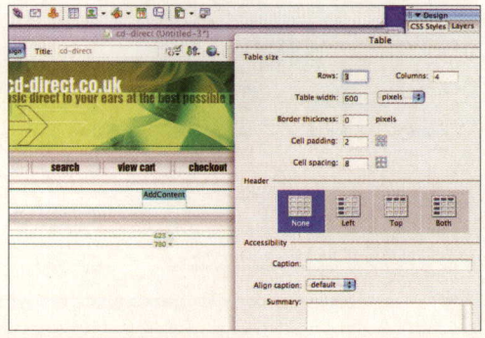
24 APPLY THE STYLE

To apply the style to the other headings, highlight them in turn and from the Style drop menu in the Properties palette, select Style3. This saves a lot of time in formatting text over and over again. Your page is now finished, so you can view it in a browser then save and close it.



25 CREATING PAGES FROM A TEMPLATE

From the File menu choose New. In the pop-up window click on the Template tab and choose the CD-direct site to display the appropriate templates, with a preview of the page design in the Preview window. Click Template and hit Create to make a new HTML page based on this design.



26 ADDING CONTENT

Select the words 'AddContent' and hit the Delete key to remove from the page. Now click the Table icon from the Insert palette. You can add any number of rows and columns to build up your design, as long as it's 600 pixels wide so that it fits with the existing page content.

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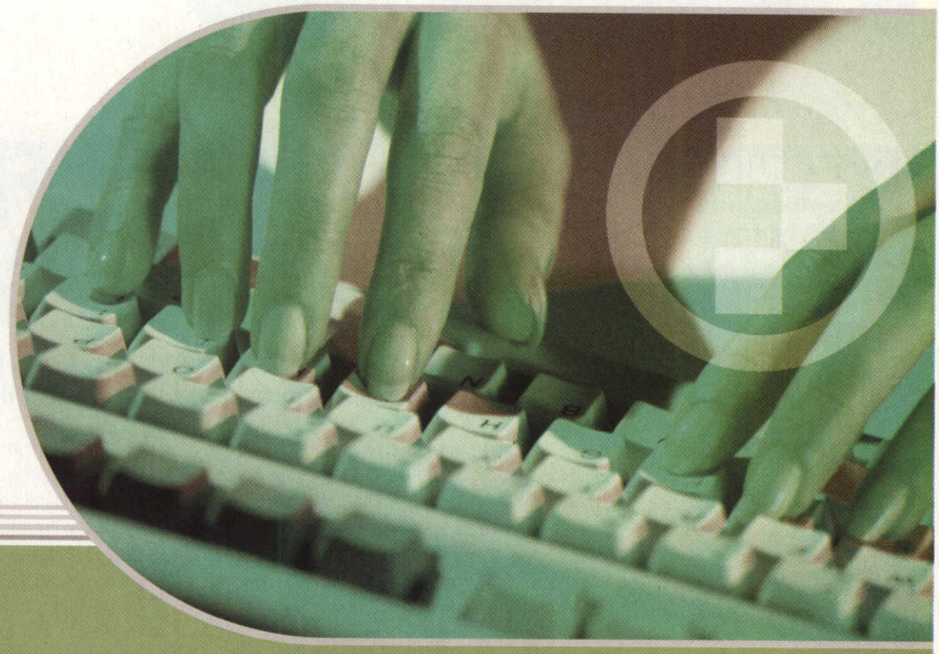

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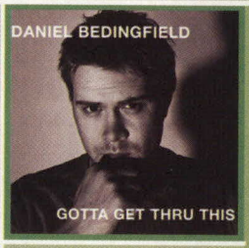

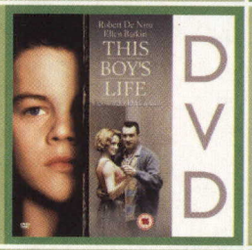

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BUILD YOUR FIRST CSS SITE IN DREAMWEAVER

THE EXPERT: MARK BILLEN

Mark studied Software Engineering and Management at Bournemouth University for four years, a course which saw him tackle heavyweight languages like Java and JavaScript, and develop his already burgeoning experience in HTML and CSS. Allied to this, Mark has also been a keen artist for many years, and likes nothing more than to create stunning pieces of digital art.

THE BRIEF

TUTORIAL OBJECTIVE
Design a site using CSS with Dreamweaver MX 2004

SKILL LEVEL

TIME REQUIRED
40 minutes

ON THE DISC
Dreamweaver/ Tutorial Files: index.html, sitestyles.css & images

PART TWO

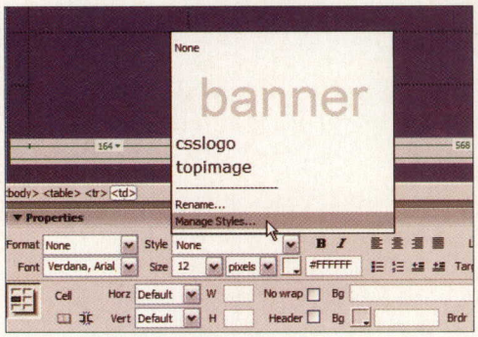
BUILD YOUR FIRST CSS SITE IN DREAMWEAVER

Heighten your knowledge of Cascading Style Sheets as we guide you through adding text, content and links to last month's page

Hopefully, last month's intro to CSS dispelled any worries you may have had about them. As a mechanism for redefining standard page tags and imposing a look across a large site they're invaluable, but do need thought.

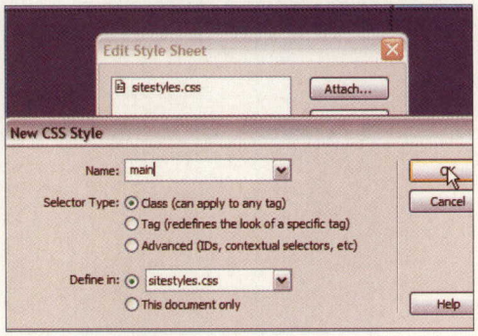
We've established that creating a page from scratch with style sheets and maintaining integrity for the method requires a change of design approach. The intended separation of HTML content from style definitions means visual instructions must come from the CSS. Luckily, Dreamweaver lets you preview the impact your attached classes have on their tags, and its dedicated tools make editing easy.

In this part we'll add more content and see how text handles can be manipulated, plus learn how to formulate collections of links and explore 'pseudo classes' which can make the **<A>** tag more dynamic. We'll also look at layout methods that include CSS-driven ** ** elements or layers that can be used for setting out a document. ■



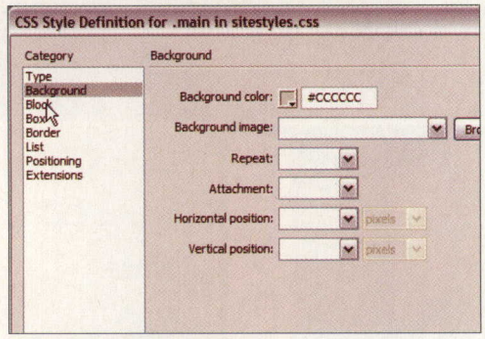
1 ADDING TEXT

Our page layout has several empty table cells that will be used to hold content. We'll start by defining and attaching a new class to the largest box by using the Style menu on the Properties panel. Here you'll see previews of available classes, but to add a new one select Manage Styles.



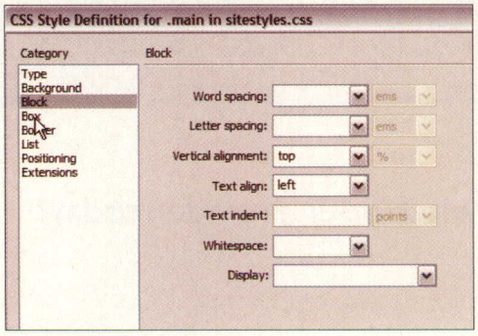
2 NEW CLASS

After choosing to create a new class, in the following dialog you need to name the class in the New CSS Style prompt. Enter the name 'main' in the first box and make sure that the first Selector Type option is picked. You should also ensure that the CSS is listed in the Define In box.



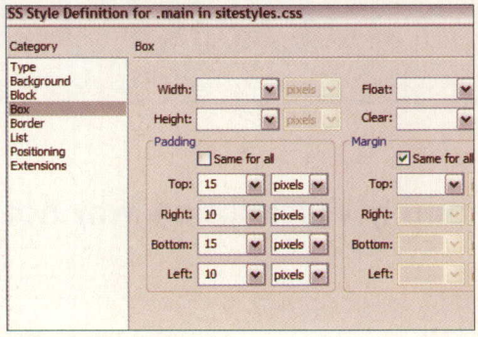
3 GREY BACKGROUND

In the Background category of the Definitions box we want to set the page colour. This will be a lighter shade of grey that the darker text will sit on. Don't worry about defining styles for the font yet; instead we need to specify text alignment by selecting the Block category.



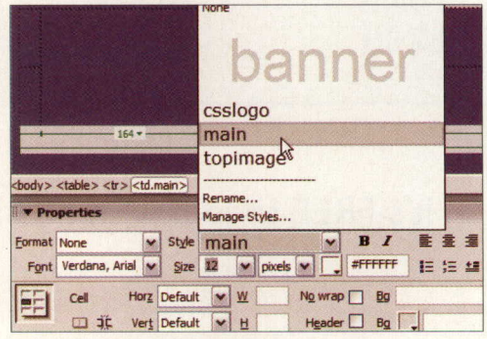
4 GET ALIGNED

The text must be situated properly within the cell, so set the Vertical Alignment property to top and Text Align to left. This will mean that any elements to be contained will now flow from the top of the space rather than from the middle.



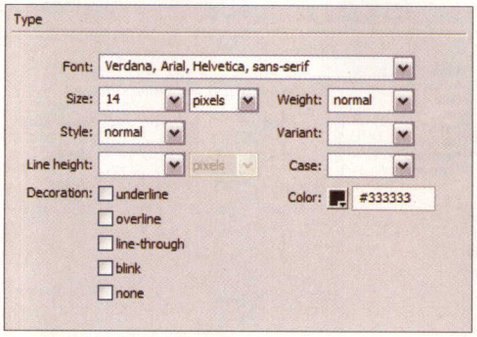
5 PADDED CELL

To add a thin border around the text, we need to set some padding inside the cell. In the Box category set the top, right, bottom and left parameters under the Padding group. Uncheck the Same For All option and enter the figures as shown before clicking Apply.



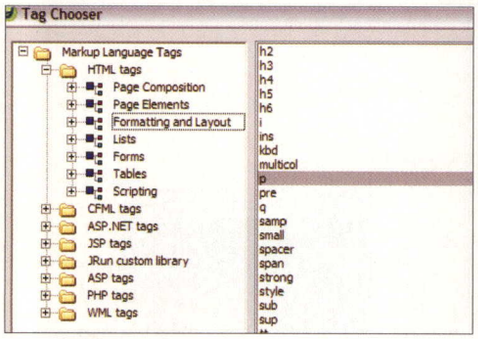
6 ATTACH THE CLASS

With the new class defined, you can attach it by first clicking the table cell and then using the Style menu again to pick it. The name 'main' should be listed, and once clicked you should see the cell background update and also the **<td>** tag in the left corner have '.main' added to it.



7 NEW PARAGRAPH

When working with larger bodies of text (especially multiple paragraphs), you'll find that the HTML will enclose the text within <p> tags. We'll redefine them by adding a new class as before, but with a Selector Type as Tag and 'p' as the name. Next, set the Type properties as shown above.



8 INSERT TAG

Before attaching the class and typing our text, we need to insert the required paragraph tag. You can do this in many ways, but try selecting Insert then Tag on the main toolbar. In the following box find the <p> tag under the Formatting and Layout HTML list, and simply insert one tag.

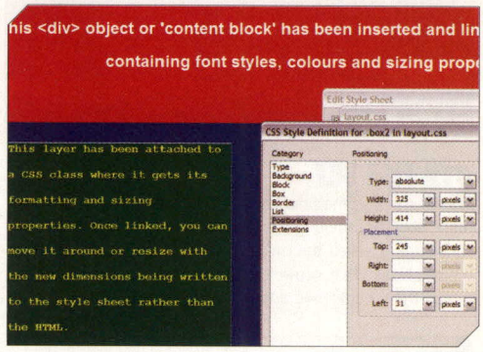
IN DETAIL: CSS LAYOUTS

Make use of class-driven Content Blocks and Layer objects to design better layouts for your documents

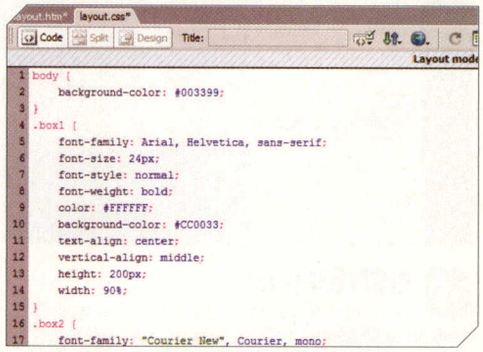
For our example site, we cut a few corners in the initial layout of our page. To save on space and time we placed CSS-styled content into a standard table design, although this isn't ideal. You'll see from the code that formatting properties like size and positioning for rows and cells still remain, when really they should exist in external classes.

Perhaps the most effective way around this, promoted by Dreamweaver MX itself, is the use of Content Blocks or ** ** elements. These are layout cells or areas drawn onto a page from classes defined in the CSS. You may have noticed that the Style Definition dialog for setting class properties has a category labelled Positioning for submitting sizing data. This can be set along with all the characteristics we've covered to produce a layout element that can contain other objects. The more traditional Layer object can also perform this function, but in a slightly more flexible way.

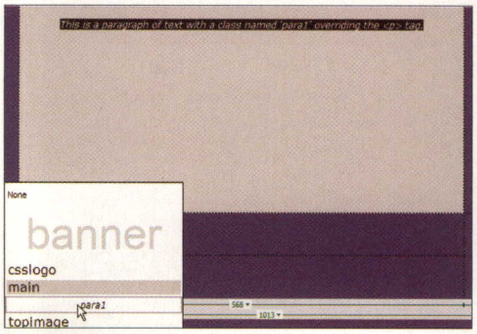
Once you've inserted one of these onto the page and attached it to a class, you can float it around in Design mode. This dynamic editing cannot be performed with Content Blocks, and makes sizing or positioning the element more intuitive. What's more, with the layer linked to a class, any amendments are directly reflected within the CSS. In the screenshots you can see both elements inserted into an example page with the dialog used to describe how they appear on the document. An extract from the attached style sheet illustrates the class properties both objects require. Your next step could be to explore these methods more closely, and use them as an alternative to table-based designs. ■



■ Both elements are inserted into the above example page, and the dialog box defines how they will appear on the document

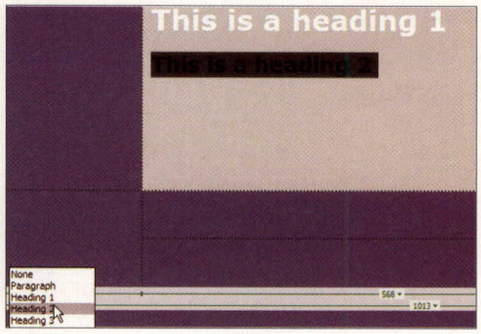


■ This extract from the attached style sheet shows the kinds of class properties that both objects require



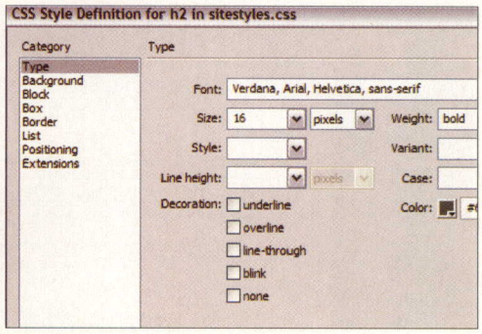
9 BASIC TEXT

Typing within the new <p> tags will give us the standard text we want to use for writing the content, and breaks for new lines and paragraphs won't lose this styling. Notice that another generic class, para1, has been used to add another varied line of text below.



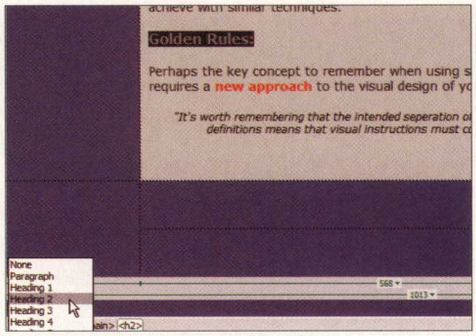
10 ADDING HEADINGS

Similarly, you can redefine the basic Heading tags so they adhere to your chosen text styles. Highlight the text you wish to identify as a header and insert one of the many <h> tags by using the Format menu located on the Properties panel.



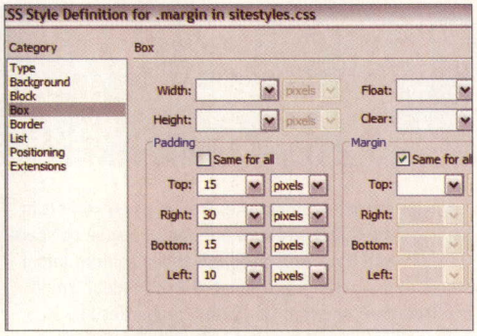
11 REDEFINING MOMENT

By redefining Header tags in the same way as you did for the <p> tag, you can give the text enclosed within them its own look. You can do this for as many tags as you like, and if you wanted a more varied range across the site you could simply attach general classes instead.



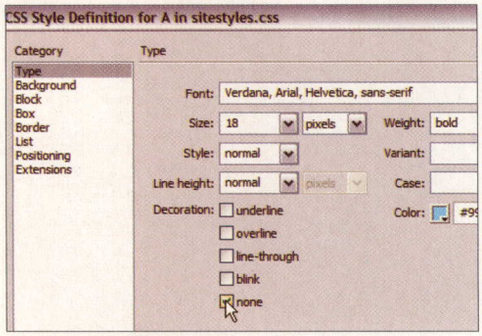
12 TEXT BOX

To enter the final text, all you need do is highlight those phrases or paragraphs you wish to apply the redefined styles to and select the classes from the Format or Styles menus. Notice that **** has been restyled like the headers to add the emboldened and red 'new approach'.



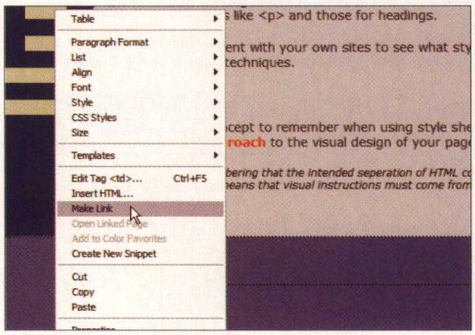
13 MARGINALLY INTERESTED

We'll begin adding our Links margin into the left table cell by attaching a new universal class named 'margin'. This is done exactly as it was for the Main class, although we need a dark blue background colour, text aligned to the top and right, while cell padding should be as shown.



14 MISSING LINKS

Inserting restyled links is really just a case of redefining the **<A>** tag to whatever styles you want. Here we'll do just that by initiating the new tag class and setting font, size, weight and colour as normal. However, you'll need to check the None box under Decoration to remove underlines.

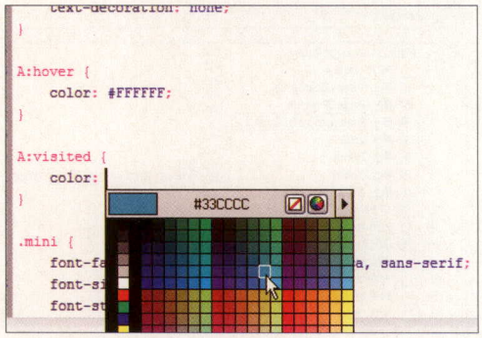


15 RESTYLED LINKS

Next, enter all the links into the margin by typing them in. You'll see them adopt the style of our **<p>** tags; highlight them and right-click. Select Make Link and point them all to the Current Page Index in the following dialog. They should all adopt the new style automatically.

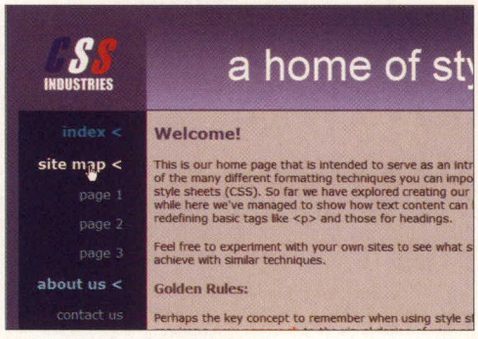
16 LINK SHRINK

To make the Link margin look more effective we want some to appear as sub-links. Simply define a new general class named 'mini' with the same Type formatting as the **<A>** class, but with a 16-pixel size and normal weight. Highlight each link and select Mini from the Styles menu.



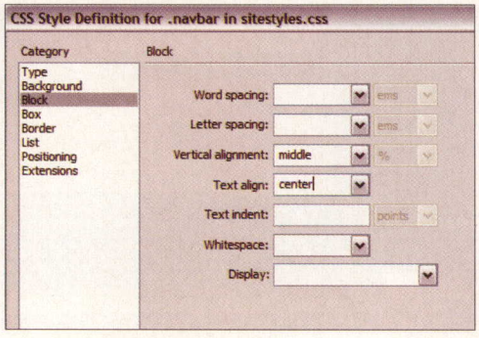
17 PSEUDO CLASSES

CSS uses Pseudo classes to alter key attributes to existing styles under certain states or actions. These can be applied to the **<A>** tag to change a link's colour when it's been visited etc. Add both **A:hover** and **A:visited** classes as shown, directly into the style sheet below the regular A class.



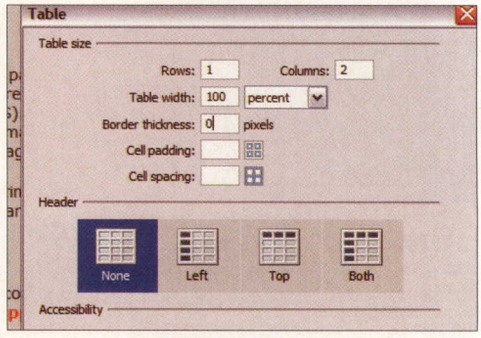
18 TIME FOR ACTION

Ensure that the new Pseudo classes are entered properly, with braces and semi-colons, before saving all files. Load the document into a browser to see the links in action, although you will need to empty the History cache and point the **<A>** tags to other HTML files for it to work.



19 NAVIGATION LINKS

On the lower right corner of the page we have a couple of thin cells, and the first one will be used to hold two Forward and Back navigation links. We first want to define a Navbar class that will simply tell any cell we attach it to that its contents must be aligned in the middle and centred.



20 NESTED TABLE

To separate and position the new links, we'll insert a table into the cell. Select Insert and Table from the main menu and set the options as shown. We only want to add a couple of links, so one row and two columns is fine, while the width should be set to 100% with no border.

BUILD YOUR FIRST CSS SITE IN DREAMWEAVER

Banner
The text-based banner was done by attaching a class to the cell tag with a tiled background image and a large styled font

Saved images
Saved images were inserted by using the CSS to reference the files as non-repeating backgrounds that were centred within the table cells

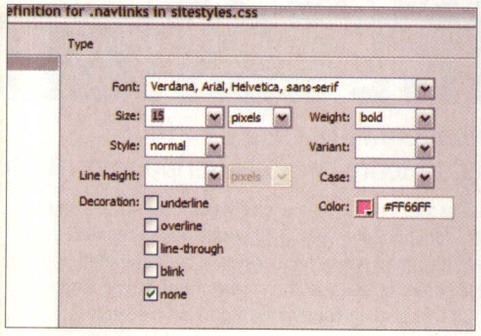
Margin links
The <A> tag was redefined in the style sheet to provide our margin links, while a Mini class was used to create the smaller sub links

Text content
Text content was added by redefining the Paragraph tag. Headers were also customised by changing the <h1> and <h2> markups, with used to highlight

Extra images
Additional images were inserted into empty cells to finish the overall look by using the same techniques as those for the banner above

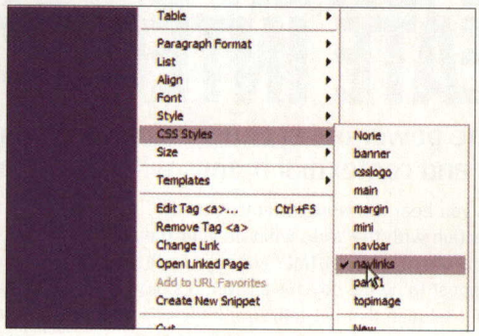
Basic scheme
If you add various lines of text that are different in appearance, you could end up with many classes defined. To avoid this try building a basic scheme that works across your site

Different links
Two navigational links were added with a different style to those in the margin. However, the Pseudo classes still work and could be used to create rollovers



21 LINKS CLASS

Attach the Navbar class to each cell of the new table cells before initiating another new general class called 'navlinks'. Under the Type category we want to set the font to our favoured style with a size of 15 pixels. Set it to Bold and give it a pink colour, remembering to set Decoration to None.



22 ALL LINKED UP

To finish, enter the text and convert it into links as we did for those in the margin. Then make sure it is all highlighted before attaching the Navlinks class, either through the Properties panel or via the cursor menu as shown. These links will also adopt the Hover Pseudo class we defined earlier.

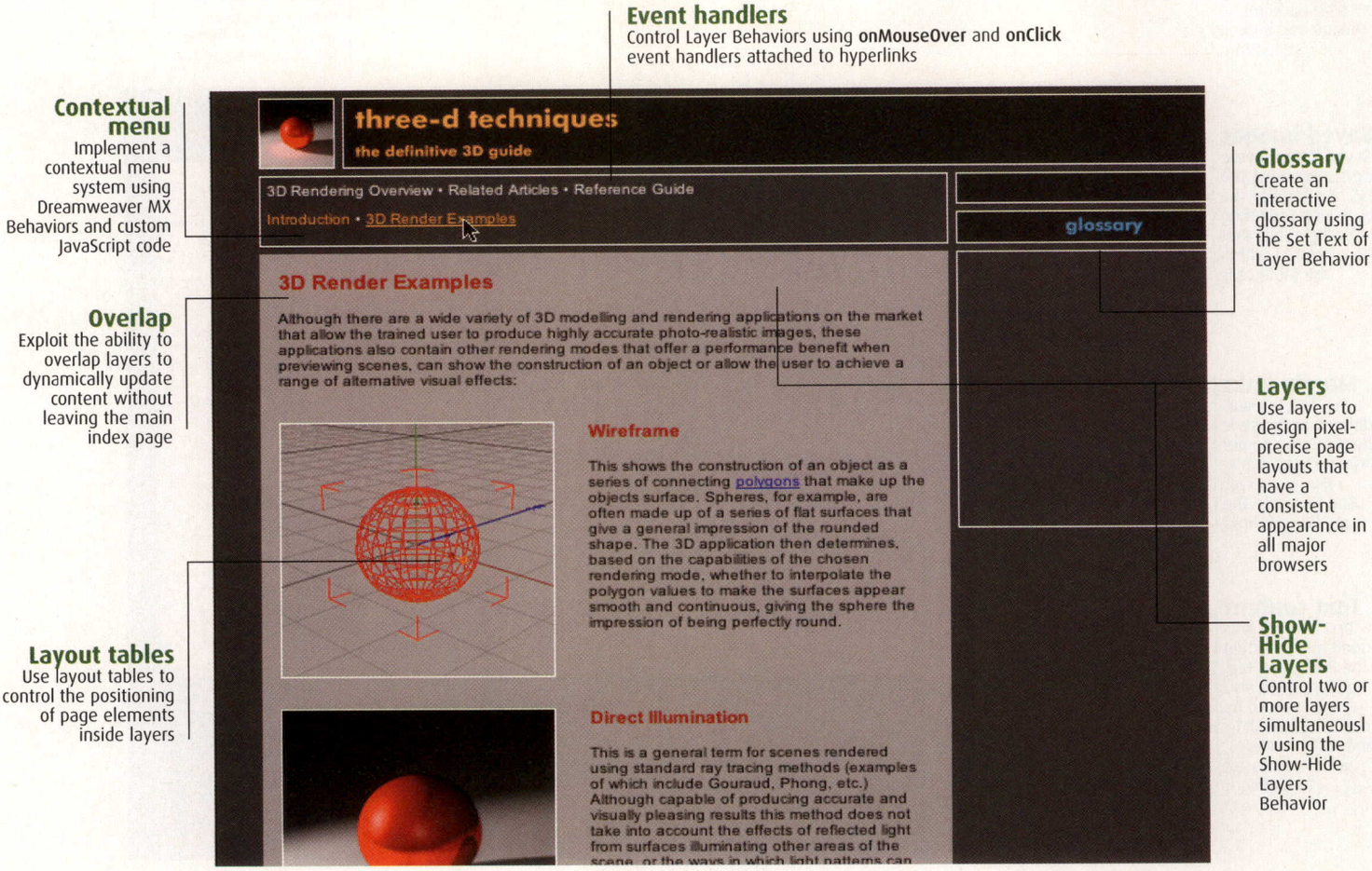
23 FINISHING TOUCHES

With most of the key concepts covered, you can complete the page as you see fit. Here we've applied existing classes to colour the few empty cells, while you might like to try adding an image into the right cell as shown. Simply attach a class with a background image as we did in part one.

TUTORIAL: DREAMWEAVER
USE LAYER BEHAVIORS TO CREATE INTERACTIVE CONTENT

THE EXPERT: NEIL WITHNALL

Neil is a freelance Web developer who has spent years learning the technical and practical aspects of Web design. He is equally at home working in Dreamweaver as he is with the latest hand-coding technologies. Check out what Neil's capable of by popping along to www.lumencorporation.com.



USE LAYER BEHAVIORS TO CREATE INTERACTIVE CONTENT

Harness the power of Layer Behaviors in Dreamweaver MX to create exciting interfaces and contextual menus without the need to learn complex scripting or Flash

THE BRIEF

TUTORIAL OBJECTIVE
Use Layer Behaviors to produce exciting interactive content

SKILL LEVEL

TIME REQUIRED
30 minutes

ON THE DISC
Dreamweaver/ Tutorial files:
assets [folder]
complete [folder]
tutorial [folder]

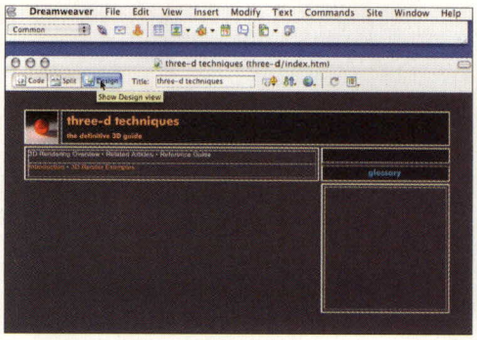
When you hear the word 'interactivity' in connection with the Web, what do your thoughts turn to – Flash, Java, DHTML? Although Flash would, at first sight, appear to be the obvious answer, it's easy to overlook another solution that has universal browser support yet provides superior access to core browser functionality by bypassing the restrictions imposed on plug-ins to give you total control over page content.

For anyone who has experienced the drudgery of navigating complex and slow-loading framesets, or the misery of waiting five minutes to download yet another superfluous Flash-based site interface, layers offer a responsive and intuitive solution that strikes the perfect balance between ease of use and powerful functionality. Thanks to standardised support, your precisely designed pages appear just as you intended, leaving you more time to focus on the core content. Layers and JavaScript can also be combined to provide a seamless interactive browsing experience.

The example project featured in this article will allow you to quickly and easily familiarise yourself with the main layer tools on offer in Dreamweaver MX, and will introduce a range of useful techniques to help you successfully author and implement your own intelligent, interactive and visually exciting Web pages. ■

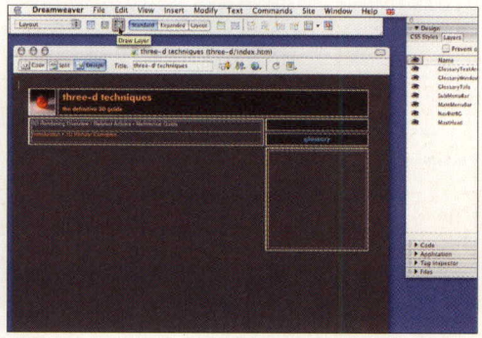
TUTORIAL: DREAMWEAVER

USE LAYER BEHAVIORS TO CREATE INTERACTIVE CONTENT



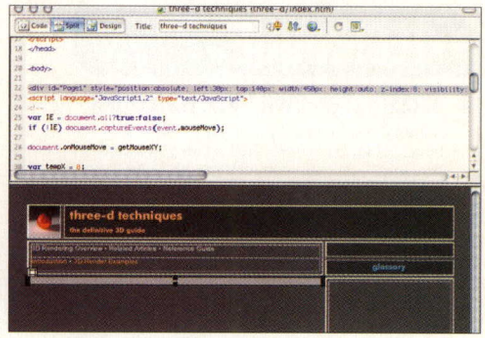
1 MAKING A START

To begin, copy the project folder from the cover CD to your hard drive and open the index.htm file in Dreamweaver MX. With the main navigation layers already in place, you're now ready to create the first page. Before continuing, make sure the document window is set to Design view.



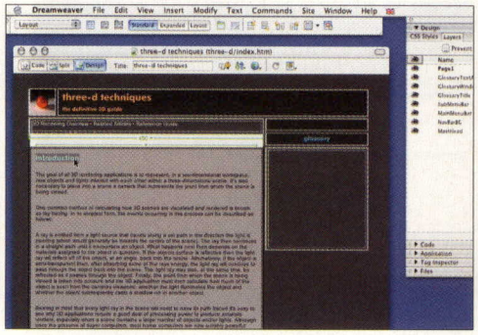
2 CREATE THE FIRST PAGE

Click anywhere in the Page window then choose Layout from the drop-down menu in the main toolbar and click on the Draw Layer icon. Starting at a point just below the navigation bar, draw an outline that roughly fills the space between the layout edge and the Glossary window.



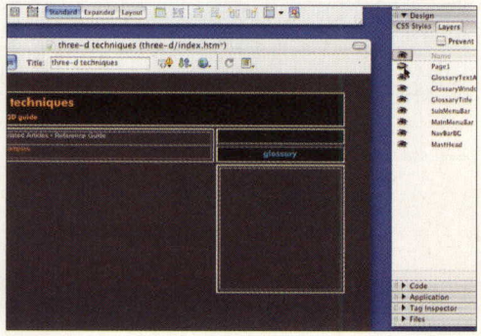
3 SET THE LAYER VALUES

Click on the tab at the top left of the new layer to activate its settings in the Properties Inspector and enter the values shown. Note the number in the Z-Index field – this relates to the order in which layers appear if they are completely or partially overlapping other layers.



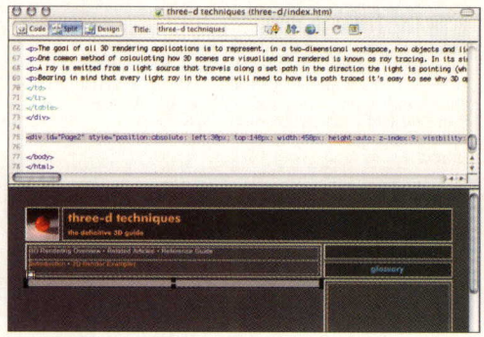
4 CREATE THE PAGE CONTENT

Now insert a one-row, one-column table into the layer with a width of 450 pixels and a padding value of 10. Then copy and paste text into it from the page1.txt file included with the project, styling the heading and paragraphs using settings already defined in the style sheet.



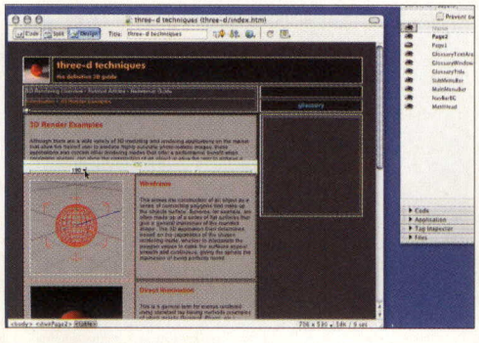
5 HIDE THE FIRST PAGE

With the page now complete, activate the layer then open the Layers palette and click twice on the Eye icon to the left of the layer name to hide it. Be aware that any changes made to settings here are updated in the main page code and external style sheets.



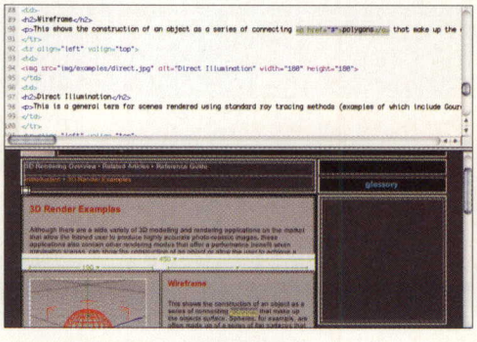
6 THE NEXT PAGE

You're now ready to create the second page. As before, draw a layer that roughly fits the available space then enter the settings as shown. Although the dimensions of this layer are identical to those of the first one, a unique name and higher Z-Index setting have now been specified.



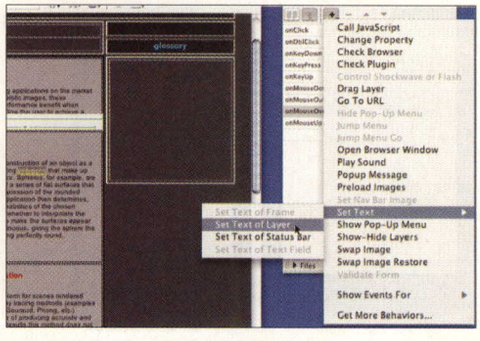
7 MORE CONTENT

For this page, create a one-row, one-column table using the previous settings, then insert after it a second table with two columns. Using text supplied in the page2.txt file, together with images placed in the img/examples folder, style the text as before then import the example images.



8 CREATE A HYPERLINK

When completed, highlight the word shown in the page text and enter a hash (#) symbol into the Link field of the Properties Inspector. This will allow you to attach a rollover Behavior to the text later on that will display a short word definition in the Glossary window.



9 ASSIGN A BEHAVIOR

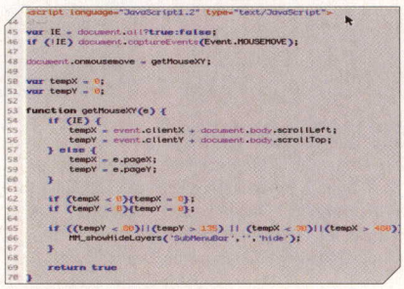
With the link highlighted, open the Behaviors palette and make sure that from the list of possible JavaScript commands that can be assigned, the onMouseOver option is selected. Now click on the Plus (+) symbol and choose Set Text>Set Text of Layer from the drop-down menu.

TUTORIAL: DREAMWEAVER
USE LAYER BEHAVIORS TO CREATE INTERACTIVE CONTENT

TECHNIQUE

CREATE YOUR OWN LAYER BEHAVIORS

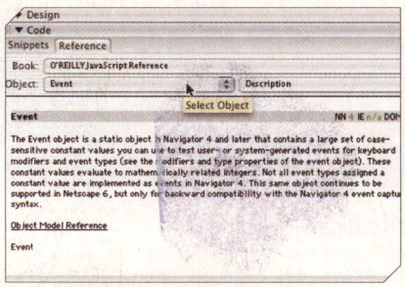
Although useful in their own right, the real power of layers is unleashed when you include JavaScript actions to control them. Dreamweaver has a wide range of pre-written scripts available, but it's easy enough to incorporate your own.



```
<script language="JavaScript1.2" type="text/JavaScript">
var IE = document.all?true:false;
if (!IE) document.captureEvents(Event.MOUSEMOVE);

document.onmousemove = getMouseXY;

var tempX = 0;
var tempY = 0;

function getMouseXY(e) {
    if (IE) {
        tempX = event.clientX + document.body.scrollLeft;
        tempY = event.clientY + document.body.scrollTop;
    } else {
        tempX = e.pageX;
        tempY = e.pageY;
    }

    if (tempX < 0){tempX = 0;}
    if (tempY < 0){tempY = 0;}

    if ((tempY < 80)||(tempY > 135) || (tempX < 30)||(tempX > 400))
        MM_showHideLayers('SubMenuBar','','hide');
    }

    return true
}
```

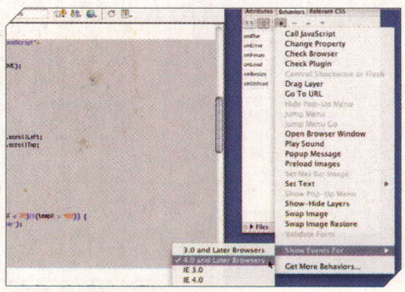
1 THE FINAL SCRIPT

The script above (defined in the project example) forms the second part of the contextual menu functionality. An event handler is used to test how close the mouse cursor is to the main menu and subsequently hides the sub menu from view if the navigation bar isn't being accessed.



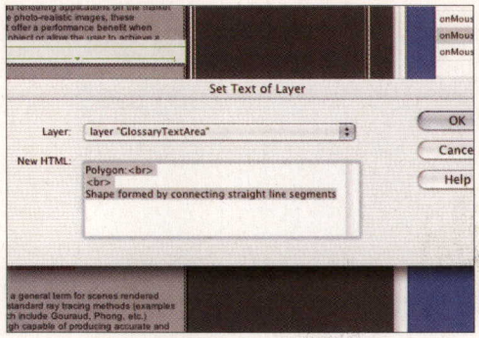
2 JAVASCRIPT REFERENCE GUIDE

If you choose to write your own scripts, don't forget that the application itself contains a full reference guide to the JavaScript language, which will prove an invaluable starting point for anyone needing code definitions or syntax examples.



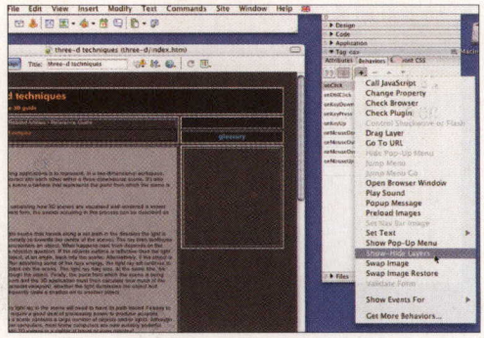
3 BROWSER SUPPORT

Although a wide range of complex effects can be achieved by using JavaScript and layers together, it's important to remember that not every browser universally supports all commands. It's therefore essential to test your scripts in as many browsers as possible to make sure any interactive elements work as expected.



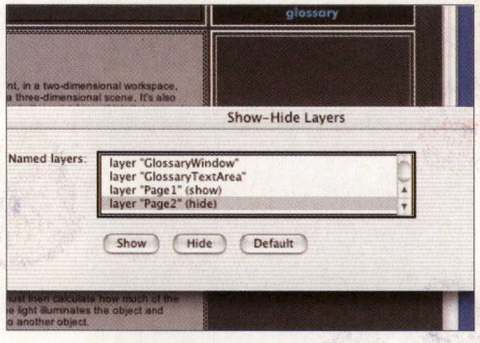
10 UPDATE THE GLOSSARY

In the dialog, select GlossaryTextArea and enter the text shown. Once confirmed, attach another Set Text of Layer Behavior to the link triggered by an **onMouseOut** event. Select GlossaryTextArea then enter a space into the field. This will blank the Glossary window when no words are selected.



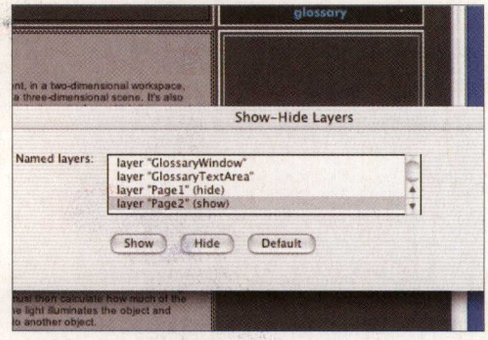
11 CONTROLLING PAGE LAYERS

The page is now complete. Before linking up the buttons, hide the second page layer in the Layers palette then make the first page layer visible again. In the sub menu, highlight the Intro hyperlink and assign to it a Show-Hide Layers Behavior that's triggered by the **onClick** command.



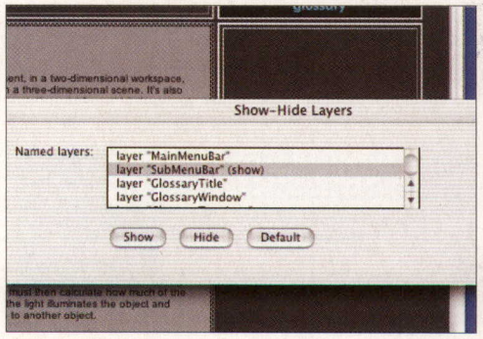
12 DISPLAY THE FIRST PAGE

This link will be used to display the first page. From the list, select the first page (layer Page1) and set its value to 'show'. To hide the second page when the first one is being shown, select the second page (layer Page 2) and set its value to 'hide'.



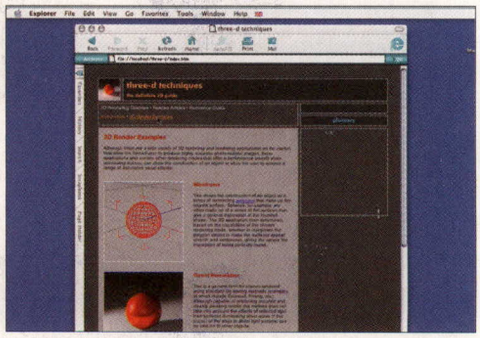
13 SWITCH PAGES

In the same way, highlight the 3D Render Examples hyperlink and assign to it a Show-Hide Layers Behavior, again activated by the **onClick** command. This time, reverse the settings as shown so that the first page will be hidden when the second page is displayed.



14 DISPLAY THE SUB MENU

To make the sub menu appear only when the 3D Rendering Overview link is accessed, assign a Show-Hide Layers Behavior to it (using **onMouseOver**) that 'shows' the SubMenuBar layer. You then need to hide the sub menu layer in the Layers palette and re-save the style sheet to update it.



15 THE END RESULT

With all the layers and scripting in place, you're now ready to view the completed page in a Web browser. As a final note, remember that all the interactive effects featured in this project were achieved without the need for complex DHTML scripting, Java applets or Flash files!

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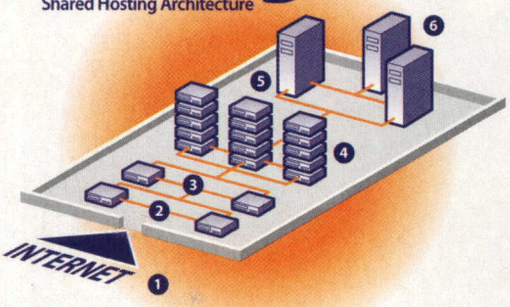

1. **Network Firewall** - Protects our network
2. **Internal Firewall** - Second protective shield
3. **Load Balancers** - Efficiently distributes traffic across server clusters
4. **Redundant Web Servers** - Ensures delivery of site contents if one server fails
5. **Network Storage** - Independent storage optimising server performance
6. **Disk Backup** - Routine backup storage to prevent data loss

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P1200

TUTORIAL: FLASH
CREATE A DESKTOP WEB SITE ENVIRONMENT

THE EXPERT: TODD YARD

Originally from Phoenix, Arizona, Todd first started using Flash when he moved to New York City (via an acting course in London). He now works for Daedalus Media (**www.daedalusmedia.com**) in New York, and is also lead Flash programmer at ego 7 (**www.ego7.com**). Todd is a regular contributor to the *Friends of Ed* series of books, and specialises in Flash, Illustrator and Photoshop.

CREATE A DESKTOP WEB SITE ENVIRONMENT

Take the recognisable desktop metaphor and customise it for your Web site, creating a unique experience high in style and focused on usability

THE BRIEF

TUTORIAL OBJECTIVE
Build a top class functional Web site using the desktop metaphor

SKILL LEVEL

TIME REQUIRED
2-4 hours

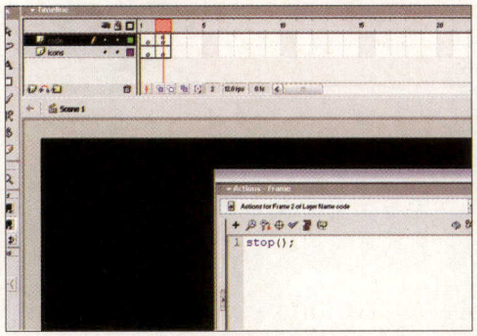
ON THE DISC
Flash/Tutorials:
complete [folder]
flas [folder]

The desktop metaphor featured in most Operating Systems provides a common ground for users to explore a structured environment. Since a Web site often holds a collection of structured information, it makes sense for a designer or developer to take this desktop metaphor and utilise it for Web site navigation and presentation. Users encountering such a site would be presented with a familiar environment with interactive controls that they would recognise, providing a comfortable foundation for them to explore, yet the experience could be tailored to suit and exhibit the tastes of the designer.

Creating such an environment means a developer first needs to identify the elements of the desktop metaphor needed for the Web site. We interact with this sort of environment every day, but realising minute aspects and building for many permutations demands some careful investigation into what makes the desktop environment so usable (and what we can do to increase usability!).

For this tutorial, we've broken down some of the common elements you'll need to create for such a site, and provided a structure to build on. Once the foundation of the desktop has been developed, you'll have creative freedom to add functionality and your own personal flair. ■

TUTORIAL: FLASH
CREATE A DESKTOP WEB SITE ENVIRONMENT



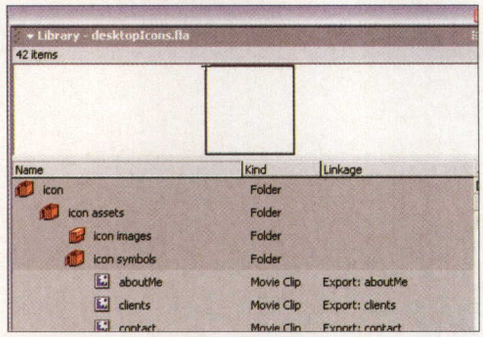
1 SET UP THE LAYER STRUCTURE

Create a new Flash movie of 800x600 with a black background. Add a second layer, naming the bottom layer 'icons' and the top layer 'code'. With both layers selected, create a second keyframe so both layers have keyframes in both frames. In Frame 2 of Code, place a stop(); action.

```
Stage.scaleMode = "noScale";
Stage.align = "TL";

_global.styleManager = {};

s = styleManager.iconTextFormat_up = new TextFormat();
s.font = "pixelFont";
s.color = 0x000000;
s.size = 8;

s = styleManager.iconTextFormat_over = new TextFormat();
s.font = "pixelFont";
s.color = 0xFFFFFF;
s.size = 8;

s = styleManager.iconStyleFormat_up = {};
s.face = 0xFF0000;
s.selected = 0xFFFFFF;
s.background = 0xFFFFFF;
s.textBorder = 0x660000;
s.textBackground = 0x999999;

s = styleManager.iconStyleFormat_over = {};
s.face = 0xFFFFFF;
s.selected = 0xFF0000;
s.background = 0xFF0000;
s.textBorder = 0x999999;
s.textBackground = 0x660000;

delete s;
```

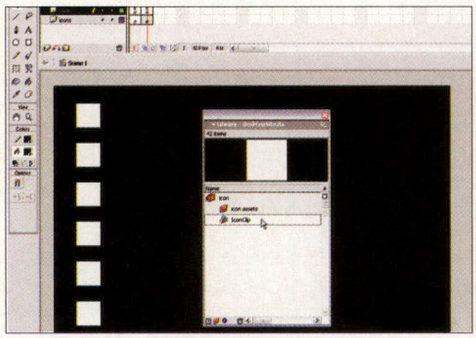
2 CODE FOR FORMATS

Select Frame 1 of Code and add the above lines to the ActionScript editor. The first two lines keep our movie from scaling in the browser and let us place elements manually. The remaining code creates a number of new objects that hold colour and text information for icon styles in our movie.



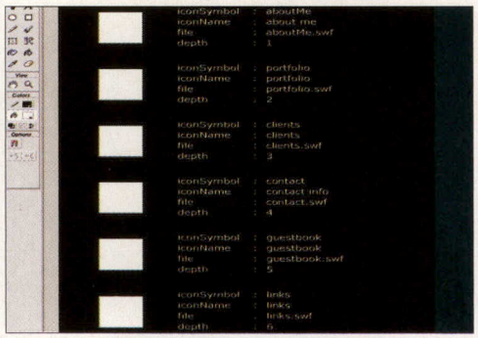
3 IMPORT THE ICON COMPONENT

To speed development for the interface, we'll use a pre-built icon component. Select File, Open as Library... and browse to desktopIcons.fla on our CD-ROM. Drag all symbols from this external library into your library.



4 ADD ICONS TO THE STAGE

Drag six icon clips from your library to the stage, placing them in Frame 2 of the Icons layer. These icons are set up to attach a symbol from the library, add a name for the icon, recolour on rollover and interact with a desktop object to open a window. We'll be building the desktop and windows.



5 PROVIDE INFORMATION FOR ICONS

In the Properties panel, add the above info to each IconClip instance you placed on the stage. The iconSymbol corresponds to an identifier in the library, the iconName will appear under the icon, File points to the window to load and Depth is the depth on which the icon will be placed.

```
#initclip

function DesktopClip(root, windowPath, windowPadding, wallpaperPath) {
    this.root = root;
    this.filepath = windowPath;
    this.windowPadding = windowPadding;
    this.init(wallpaperPath);
}

p = DesktopClip.prototype;

delete p;

#endinitclip
```

6 CREATE THE DESKTOP OBJECT

Create a new symbol (Control & F8), name it 'DesktopClip' and export it for ActionScript as 'DesktopClip'. In Symbol Editing mode, select Frame 1 then place the above ActionScript. These lines set up a new class for our desktop object, where we pass the paths to our windows and wallpaper.

```
p.init = function(wallpaperPath) {
    this.windowHolder = this.root.createEmptyMovieClip("windowHolder", 1000);
    this.windowDepth = 0;
    this.windows = {};
    this.loadWallpaper(wallpaperPath);
    Stage.addListener(this);
};

p.onResize = function() {
    this.wallpaper._width = Stage.width;
    this.wallpaper._height = Stage.height;
};

p.loadWallpaper = function(wallpaperPath) {
    var w = this.wallpaper = this.root.createEmptyMovieClip("wallpaper", 0);
    w.loadMovie(wallpaperPath);
    w._visible = 0;
    w._alpha = 0;
    clearInterval(this.loadInterval);
    this.loadInterval = setInterval(this, "assessLoad", 40);
};

delete p;

#endinitclip
```

7 INITIALISE DESKTOP, LOAD WALLPAPER

Add the above functions to the DesktopClip class. **Init** creates a clip and array to hold window movie clips; **onResize** will be called when the browser size is changed and will resize the wallpaper; **loadWallpaper** loads it into a new clip. An interval is called to check when the clip is loaded so we can resize it.

```
p.loadWallpaper = function(wallpaperPath) {
    var w = this.wallpaper = this.root.createEmptyMovieClip("wallpaper", 0);
    w.loadMovie(wallpaperPath);
    w._visible = 0;
    w._alpha = 0;
    clearInterval(this.loadInterval);
    this.loadInterval = setInterval(this, "assessLoad", 40);
};

p.assessLoad = function() {
    if (this.wallpaper.getBytesLoaded()/this.wallpaper.getBytesTotal() == 1) {
        clearInterval(this.loadInterval);
        this.onResize();
        this.wallpaper._alpha = 100;
        this.wallpaper._visible = 1;
    }
};

delete p;

#endinitclip
```

8 CHECKING THE WALLPAPER LOAD

The **setInterval** we added calls the **assessLoad** function every 40 milliseconds; **assessLoad** uses **getBytesLoaded()** to check when the wallpaper image is fully loaded, then makes it visible, resizes it and clears the interval. We load wallpaper like this so our main site loads quickly and wallpaper can come later.

```
Stage.scaleMode = "noScale";
Stage.align = "TL";

_global.desktop = new DesktopClip(this, "windows/", 5, "wallpaper.swf");

_global.styleManager = {};

s = styleManager.iconTextFormat_up = new TextFormat();
s.font = "pixelFont";
s.color = 0x000000;
s.size = 8;

s = styleManager.iconTextFormat_over = new TextFormat();
s.font = "pixelFont";
s.color = 0xFFFFFF;
s.size = 8;

s = styleManager.iconStyleFormat_up = {};
s.face = 0xFF0000;
s.selected = 0xFFFFFF;
s.background = 0xFFFFFF;
s.textBorder = 0x660000;
s.textBackground = 0x999999;
```

9 INSTANTIATING THE DESKTOP

On the main timeline add the white line to Frame 1 of Code, creating an instance of our DesktopClip class. We pass the timeline where the instance was created, the path to windows files, wallpaper and the window padding. Ensure wallpaper.swf is in the same directory as the movie etc, then test the movie.

```
s = styleManager.iconStyleFormat_over = {};
s.face = 0xFFFFFF;
s.selected = 0xFF0000;
s.background = 0xFF0000;
s.textBorder = 0x999999;
s.textBackground = 0x660000;

s = styleManager.windowStyleFormat = {};
s.face = 0x333333;
s.highlight = 0x666666;
s.shadow = 0x000000;
s.iconColor = 0xFFFFFF;

s = styleManager.windowTextFormat = new TextFormat();
s.font = "pixelFont";
s.color = 0xFFFFFF;
s.size = 8;
```

10 ADDING WINDOW STYLES

Before we begin building the windows, we define some additional styles for them. These are added to the main timeline, Code layer, Frame 1, among the other styles added to our custom styleManager. The styles will provide colour and text information for the windows when launched.

```
#initclip

function WindowClip() {
    this.init();
}

p = WindowClip.prototype = new MovieClip();

p.init = function() {
    this.createEmptyMovieClip("backPane", 10);
    this.createEmptyMovieClip("appHolder", 20);
    this.createEmptyMovieClip("innerBorder", 30);
    this.appHolder.loadMovie(this.file);
    this.appHolder._visible = 0;
    this.appHolder._alpha = 0;
    clearInterval(this.loadInterval);
    this.loadInterval = setInterval(this, "assessLoad", 40)
};

Object.registerClass("WindowClip", WindowClip);

delete p;

#endinitclip
```

11 CREATING A WINDOWCLIP CLASS

Create a new movie clip (Control & F8) named 'WindowClip' and export it for ActionScript with the identifier 'WindowClip'. Open the ActionScript editor and add the above. This creates a new class for our windows. The **Init** creates holder clips and loads a specified file into the window.

```
};

p.assessLoad = function() {
    var a = this.appHolder;
    if (a.getBytesLoaded()/a.getBytesTotal() == 1 && a._width > 10) {
        clearInterval(this.loadInterval);
        this.drawBack();
        this.addTitle();
        this.addClose();
        this.addShadow(1.5);
        this.addShadow(3.5);
        this.addShadow(5.5);
        a._visible = 1;
        a._alpha = 100;
    }
};

Object.registerClass("WindowClip", WindowClip);

delete p;

#endinitclip
```

12 LOADING THE WINDOW CONTENT

Just as we did with the wallpaper, we have to set up an interval to check when the window content is fully loaded, using **getBytesLoaded()**. Once the content has loaded, we make it visible and draw the graphics below it based on its size. This lets us have content windows of different sizes.

```
p.drawBack = function() {
    var b = this.backPane;
    var p = desktop.windowPadding;
    var w = this.width = this.appHolder._width + p*2;
    var h = this.height = this.appHolder._height + p*5;
    b.clear();
    b.lineStyle(1, styleManager.windowStyleFormat.highlight, 100);
    b.moveTo(0, h);
    b.beginFill(styleManager.windowStyleFormat.face, 100);
    b.lineTo(0, 0);
    b.lineTo(w, 0);
    b.lineStyle(1, styleManager.windowStyleFormat.shadow, 100);
    b.lineTo(w, h);
    b.lineTo(0, h);
    b.endFill();
    b.onPress = this.dragWindow;
    b.onRelease = b.onReleaseOutside = this.releaseWindow;
    b.useHandCursor = 0;
    this.appHolder._x = p;
    this.appHolder._y = p*4;
};

Object.registerClass("WindowClip", WindowClip);
```

13 DRAWING THE WINDOW PANE

After adding the window padding to our height and width, we draw a box around our window content with an outline to help simulate 3D (light on the top and left, shadow on the right and bottom). We also add button events to enable dragging of the window and offset the content so it's centred.

```
    b.lineTo(0, h);
    b.endFill();
    b.onPress = this.dragWindow;
    b.onRelease = b.onReleaseOutside = this.releaseWindow;
    b.useHandCursor = 0;
    this.appHolder._x = p;
    this.appHolder._y = p*4;
    b = this.innerBorder;
    b.clear();
    b.lineStyle(1, styleManager.windowStyleFormat.shadow, 100);
    b.moveTo(p, h-p);
    b.lineTo(p, p*4);
    b.lineTo(w-p, p*4);
    b.lineStyle(1, styleManager.windowStyleFormat.highlight, 100);
    b.lineTo(w-p, h-p);
    b.lineTo(p, h-p);
};

Object.registerClass("WindowClip", WindowClip);

delete p;
```

14 ADDING AN INNER BEVEL

To complete the window pane we add an outline around our loaded content, coloured to represent an inner bevel. This helps create an illusion of 3D with our window, with the content inset within the pane. Notice how all the window's colours are taken from our global styleManager.

IN DETAIL: FLASH AND OOP

Object Oriented Programming in Flash equals less development time and more modularity

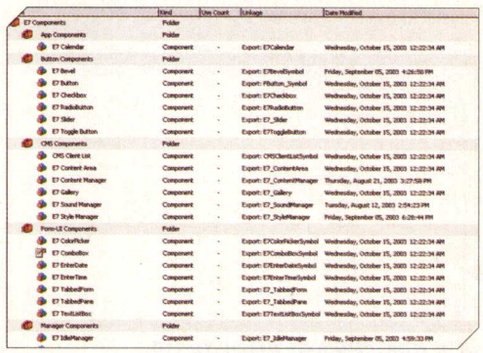
Many Flash developers begin without any ActionScript knowledge, let alone knowledge of more complex programming languages, so developing OOP applications can seem a bit daunting. But once you get to grips with the basic concept, you'll find it next to impossible to develop without it.

Flash MX allows only for a certain strain of OOP (it's more fully realised in ActionScript 2.0 in Flash MX 2004). This involves making classes in the library and building on the prototype property. A class is a template for an object and holds info on what the object does and how it does it. Each object created from a Class template is called an 'instance'. Each instance has the methods and properties created in the Class template, but the values for the properties can change from instance to instance.

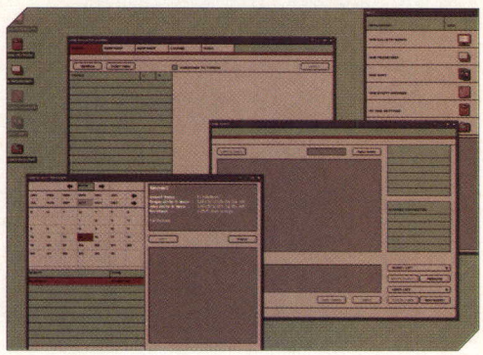
This idea of classes and instances is demonstrated in movie clips. The MovieClip class is an abstract definition of what a movie clip is and does. When you create a Movie Clip symbol in Flash, you're effectively creating an instance of the MovieClip class. This instance has all the properties and methods already defined in MovieClip.

Instances don't have to be physical objects like movie clips. In this tutorial we create an instance of DesktopClip, which is a class we define in the library. This DesktopClip instance exists only in code, but we can reference its methods and properties through the instance.

An OOP app is one where you compartmentalise code into separate classes that focus on specific functionality. Instances interact but don't directly alter the properties of other instances. In a complex app, hundreds of instances may be working together for the user. ■



■ Classes and components go together in the Library to form the basis for any good desktop-based Web interface



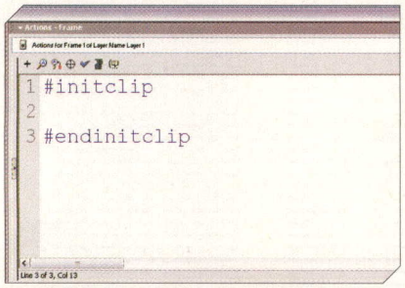
■ With a little bit of learning and a lot of effort, you could be building desktop environments like this one

TUTORIAL: FLASH
CREATE A DESKTOP WEB SITE ENVIRONMENT

TECHNIQUE

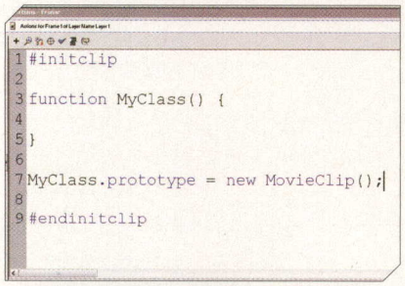
CLASS CODE EXPLAINED

In this tutorial we've created several classes to handle our interface. These clips contained in our library are a first step to understanding Object Oriented Programming in Flash, a technique that will increase your productivity when developing.



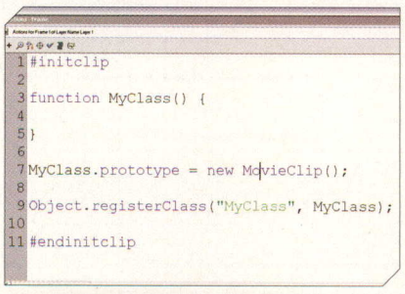
1 #INITCLIP AND #ENDINITCLIP

These two bookend commands inform Flash that the code between needs to be run before the first frame of the movie so the class definition will exist for instances created in the first frame. It also ensures that the code will only be run once, no matter the number of instances.



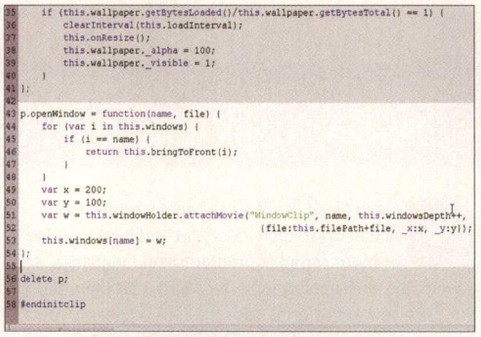
2 CLASS CONSTRUCTOR & PROTOTYPE

The constructor for the class looks like any other function, but will always be your class's name. Once defined, you can access the function's prototype property that holds all its properties and methods. By setting the prototype to equal an instance of another class, you allow your class to inherit all methods and properties from the other.



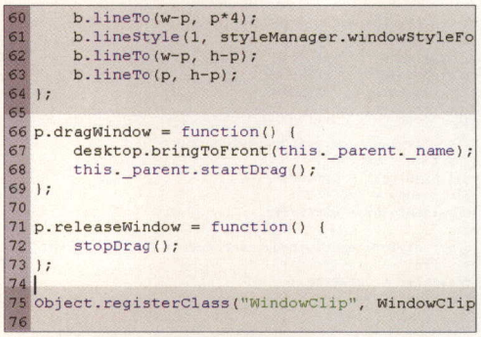
3 REGISTERING THE CLASS

Once a class is defined, if it inherits from MovieClip we need to associate it with a symbol in the library. We use **Object.registerClass** for this purpose, sending the symbol identifier and the class name. Now any instance of that Movie Clip symbol will be associated with our new class.



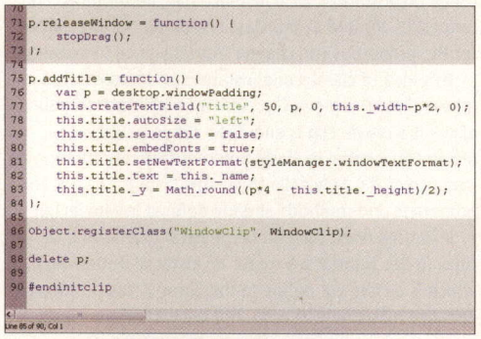
15 OPENING THE WINDOW

Enter Symbol Editing mode for DesktopClip and add the above, which will be called when an icon is clicked. This checks to see if a window is loaded, and if so will bring it to the front. Otherwise, the new window is attached and a reference put in the window's array. Note: we pass the window the file to load.



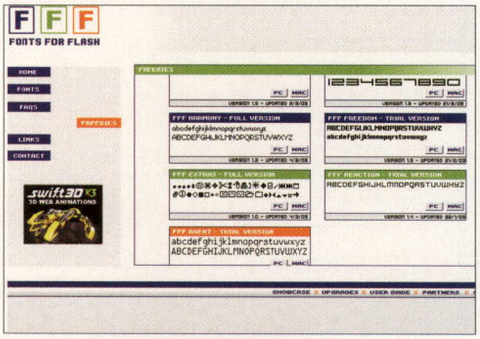
16 DRAGGING THE WINDOW

Go back in the WindowClip symbol and add the above two functions. These will enable the user to drag the window about the stage. We have to use **parent** because it is the pane that will receive the button event, yet the entire window needs to be moved, not just the pane graphic.



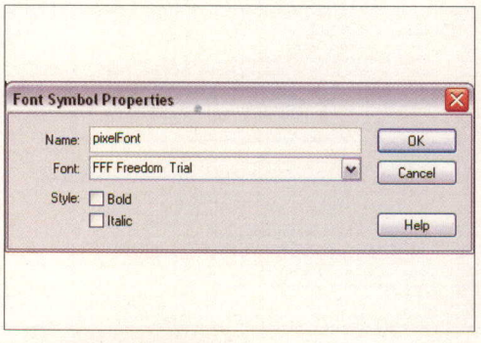
17 ADD A WINDOW TITLE

To better identify the windows, we now add a new function to the WindowClip symbol that adds a title to our window pane. Once again we look to the global styleManager that we created back in step 2, with the formats we created in step 10.



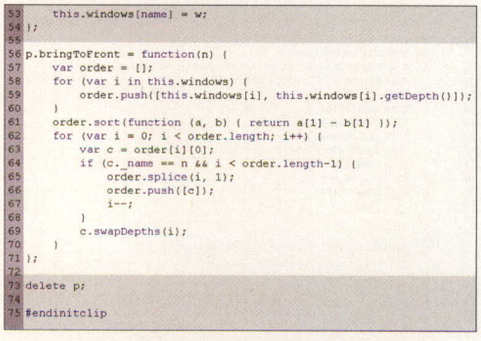
18 DOWNLOAD A PIXEL FONT

To see fonts in windows and icons, we need to embed a font in our movie. For our interface, using a pixel font will be best for readability. **www.FontsForFlash.com** offers an array of pixel fonts for sale as well as several freebies. We used the free FFF Freedom and recommend you download the same.



19 EMBED THE FONT

Click on the Library Panels menu and select New Font. Name the new font 'pixelFont' and select your choice from the drop-down list (we used FFF Freedom). Click OK, then export the font from the library with the identifier 'pixelFont'.



20 SWAPPING WINDOW DEPTHS

Add the above function to DesktopClip. This places all windows and their depths into an array, then sorts it in order of depths. It now runs through this order and when it finds the clicked window, removes it and places it at the end of the array, effectively swapping it to the top of the stack.

```
Actions for Frame 1 of Layer Name button code
#initclip

function ButtonClip() {
    this.init();
}

p = ButtonClip.prototype = new MovieClip();

Object.registerClass("ButtonClip", ButtonClip);

delete p;

#endinitclip
```

21 CREATE A BUTTONCLIP CLASS

For our Window Close button, we'll create a new class. Select Insert, New Symbol, name it 'ButtonClip' and export it for ActionScript with the identifier 'ButtonClip'. In Symbol Editing mode for ButtonClass, add the above Class Definition code to the ActionScript window (see the Technique boxout).

```
p = ButtonClip.prototype = new MovieClip();

p.init = function() {
    this.createEmptyMovieClip("back_mc", 0);
    this.createEmptyMovieClip("bevel_mc", 5);
    this.bevel_mc._x = this.bevel_mc._y = 1;
    this.createEmptyMovieClip("face_mc", 10);
    this.face_mc._x = this.face_mc._y = 2;
    this.attachMovie(this.icon, "icon_mc", 20);
    (new Color(this.icon_mc)).setRGB(this.styleFormat.iconColor);
    this.setStyles();
    this.drawBack();
    this.drawState("up");
};

Object.registerClass("ButtonClip", ButtonClip);

delete p;

#endinitclip
```

22 CREATE NESTED CLIPS

In the ButtonClip **Init** function we create some movie clips to hold our button graphics. We also attach a symbol from the library and colour it according to the styleFormat property, which we'll define when we attach an instance of ButtonClip. The last two functions called will draw the button graphics.

```
    this.face_mc._x = this.face_mc._y = 2;
    this.attachMovie(this.icon, "icon_mc", 20);
    (new Color(this.icon_mc)).setRGB(this.styleFormat.iconColor);
    this.setStyles();
    this.drawBack();
    this.drawState("up");
    this.onRollOver = function() { this.drawState("over") };
    this.onRollOut = this.onDragOut = function() { this.drawState("up") };
    this.onPress = function() { this.drawState("down") };
    this.onRelease = function() {
        this.drawState("over");
        this.callBackObj[this.callBackFunc](this);
    };
    this.useHandCursor = 0;
};

Object.registerClass("ButtonClip", ButtonClip);

delete p;

#endinitclip
```

23 ALLOWING FOR INTERACTION

Add the above lines to ButtonClip's **Init** function. They let the user interact with the button, and the button's graphics will be redrawn depending on the state. When the button is released, a function **callBackFunc** is called in the object **callBackObj**. We'll define this when we attach a button instance.

```
p.drawBack = function() {
    var b = this.back_mc;
    b.clear();
    b.beginFill(this.shadow_up, 100);
    b.lineTo(this.width, 0);
    b.lineTo(0, this.height);
    b.lineTo(0, 0);
    b.endFill();
    b.moveTo(this.width, 0);
    b.beginFill(this.highlight_up, 100);
    b.lineTo(this.width, this.height);
    b.lineTo(0, this.height);
    b.lineTo(this.height, 0);
    b.endFill();
};
```

24 DRAW THE BACKGROUND BEVEL

Add the above function to ButtonClip to draw its background bevel. Again we look to the styleFormat property for colour info, then use the drawing API to draw the graphics. We draw two contrasting triangles (forming a square) using a dark and light colour to create a 3D lighting effect.

```
p.setStyles = function() {
    this.highlight_up = this.styleFormat.highlight;
    this.shadow_up = this.styleFormat.shadow;
    this.face_up = this.styleFormat.face;
    var c = this.styleFormat.face;
    var r = (c >> 16 & 0xFF)*1.7;
    var g = (c >> 8 & 0xFF)*1.7;
    var b = (c & 0xFF)*1.7;
    r = Math.min(r, 255);
    g = Math.min(g, 255);
    b = Math.min(b, 255);
    this.face_over = r << 16 | g << 8 | b;
    this.shadow_over = this.styleFormat.shadow;
    this.highlight_over = this.styleFormat.highlight;
    var c = this.styleFormat.face;
    var r = (c >> 16 & 0xFF)*.6;
    var g = (c >> 8 & 0xFF)*.6;
    var b = (c & 0xFF)*.6;
    r = Math.max(r, 0);
    g = Math.max(g, 0);
    b = Math.max(b, 0);
    this.face_down = r << 16 | g << 8 | b;
    this.shadow_down = this.styleFormat.highlight;
    this.highlight_down = this.styleFormat.shadow;
};
```

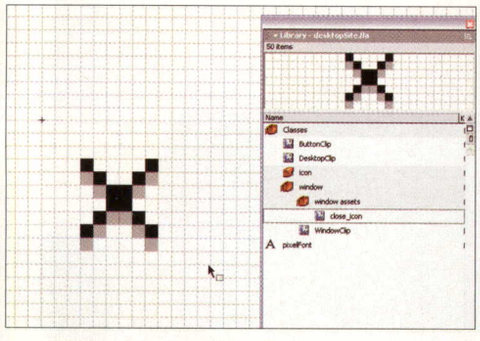
25 DETERMINING STATE COLOURS

This function for ButtonClip takes the colours in the styleFormat property and lightens/darkens them for its three states. The process for both the Over and Down states involves splitting a hex colour into its three components, multiplying to make them darker or lighter, then combining into a colour.

```
p.drawState = function(s) {
    var b = this.bevel_mc;
    b.clear();
    b.beginFill(this["highlight_" + s], 100);
    b.lineTo(this.width-2, 0);
    b.lineTo(0, this.height-2);
    b.lineTo(0, 0);
    b.endFill();
    b.moveTo(this.width-2, 0);
    b.beginFill(this["shadow_" + s], 100);
    b.lineTo(this.width-2, this.height-2);
    b.lineTo(0, this.height-2);
    b.lineTo(this.height-2, 0);
    b.endFill();
    var f = this.face_mc;
    f.clear();
    f.beginFill(this["face_" + s], 100);
    f.lineTo(this.width-4, 0);
    f.lineTo(this.width-4, this.height-4);
    f.lineTo(0, this.height-4);
    f.endFill();
};
```

26 DRAWING BASED ON STATE

Add the above **drawState()** function to ButtonClip. This will draw the button based on its current state (Up, Over or Down). The state will be sent as 's' to the function. We use the drawing API to create highlight and shadow triangles (to make a square) and the square face on top.



27 MAKE A CLOSE ICON

Create a new movie clip named 'close_icon' and export it as 'close_icon' as well. In Symbol Editing mode, draw an 'X' that is 6x6px with the graphic's top left sitting at coordinates (3, 3). Make the graphic pixel perfect by turning on Snap to Pixels and using 1x1 pixel squares.

```
    this.createTextField("title", 50, p, 0, this._width-p*2, 0);
    this.title.autoSize = "left";
    this.title.selectable = false;
    this.title.embedFonts = true;
    this.title.setNewTextFormat(styleManager.windowTextFormat);
    this.title.text = this._name;
    this.title._y = Math.round((p*4 - this.title._height)/2);
};

p.addClose = function() {
    var bnSize = 12;
    var c = this.attachMovie("ButtonClip", "close_bn", 40,
                             {styleFormat:styleManager.windowStyleFormat,
                              width:bnSize, height:bnSize, icon:"close_icon",
                              callBackObj:this, callBackFunc:"closeWindow"});
    c._x = this.width - desktop.windowPadding - bnSize;
    c._y = Math.round((desktop.windowPadding*4 - bnSize)/2);
};

p.closeWindow = function() {
    desktop.closeWindow(this._name);
};

Object.registerClass("WindowClip", WindowClip);

delete p;
```

28 ATTACH THE CLOSE BUTTON

Return to WindowClip and add the above functions to attach the Close button and close the window. Note how we pass all necessary properties to the button in the **attachMovie** call, including a reference to its icon, what function to call when pressed and where to find this function.

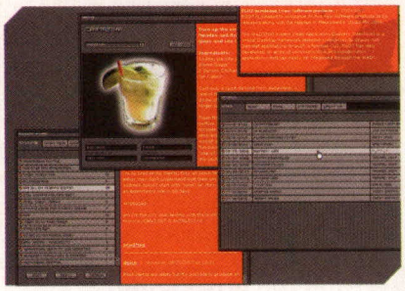
```

p.closeWindow = function(w) {
    this.windows[w].removeMovieClip();
    delete this.windows[w];
    var n = 0;
    for (var i in this.windows) {
        var d = this.windows[i].getDepth();
        if (d > n) {
            var top = i;
            n = d;
        }
    }
    this.bringToFront(d);
};

delete p;
```

29 CLOSE THE WINDOWS

When clicked the Close button will call the window's **closeWindow()** function, which in turn calls the desktop's **closeWindow()** function. Add the above function to DesktopClip to handle this. It removes the clip and the reference from the array, and resets the depths of the remaining windows.

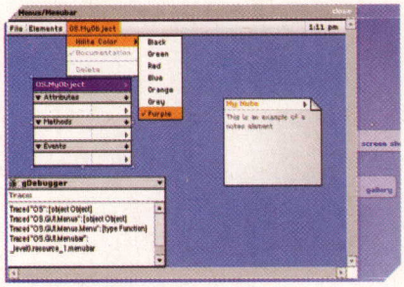
TUTORIAL: FLASH MX 2004
CREATE A DESKTOP WEB SITE ENVIRONMENT

BOOKMARKS



EGO7
www.sego7.com

The EGO7 Web site is a prime example of making the desktop interface unique and exciting, incorporating music, animation and cool effects amidst the standard interface controls.



GSKINNER.COM
www.gskinner.com/site1

Grant Skinner has created a collection of assets for his FlashOS which allow developers to create applications and sites using the desktop metaphor.

YOUR NEXT MOVE

MAKE IT YOUR OWN

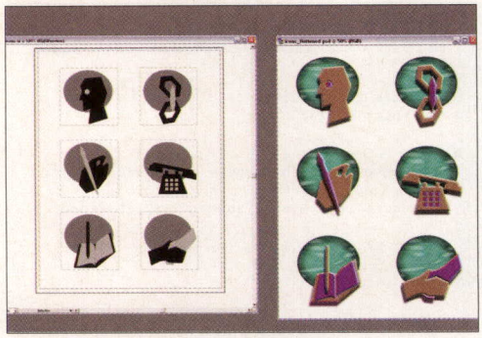
A desktop interface is a complex beast, and although we have tamed it to a considerable extent, there is obviously plenty more you can accomplish with such a structure. Possibly you can make the interface customisable for the user, allowing them to select wallpaper or perhaps upload their own. Icons can be made draggable, and a SharedObject can be used to save their location for the user's return. Maybe you could include a colour picker so the user can set new styles and have them saved as well.

For the windows themselves, a resizable option would be a nice addition, as would be the ability to minimise and maximise each window. Taking this a step further, cascading or tiling windows adds to usability. And for style, how about a little animation and sound thrown in? You have the foundation – now make it yours!

```
94
95 p.closeWindow = function() {
96     desktop.closeWindow(this._name);
97 };
98
99 p.addShadow = function(n) {
100    var s = this.createEmptyMovieClip("shadow" + n, n);
101    s._x = n;
102    s._y = n;
103    s.beginFill(0, 10);
104    s.lineTo(this.width, 0);
105    s.lineTo(this.width, this.height);
106    s.lineTo(0, this.height);
107    s.endFill();
108 };
109
110 Object.registerClass("WindowClip", WindowClip);
111
112 delete p;
```

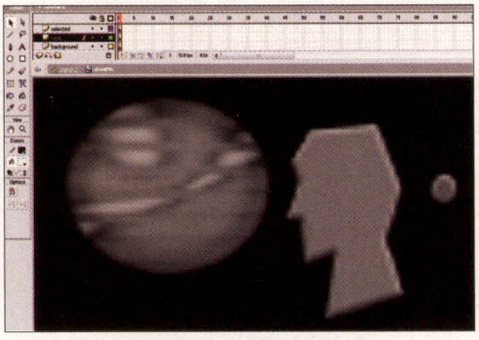
30 ADDING A WINDOW SHADOW

We have completed the functionality, now it's time to add personal touches. Add this function to WindowClip to draw a shadow underneath the window. We called this function three times in the assessLoad function to add three square shadows, creating a nice, subtle blur.



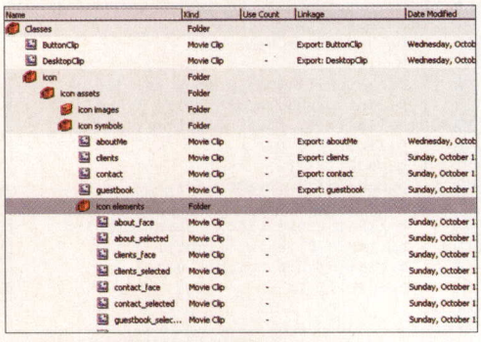
31 CREATING ICON GRAPHICS

To make this interface your own, create graphics for the icons. We created ours in Illustrator and Photoshop, with each icon exported in Greyscale as a transparent PNG in three parts – the background oval and two foreground pieces. Using Greyscale allows us to colourise in Flash.



32 SETTING UP ICON ELEMENTS

For your icon graphics to work within the interface you need to make each of the three elements into a movie clip, and name them 'background_mc', 'face_mc' and 'selected_mc'. For multiple elements, use 'face1_mc', 'face2_mc', etc. Splitting into elements allows us to colour each separately.

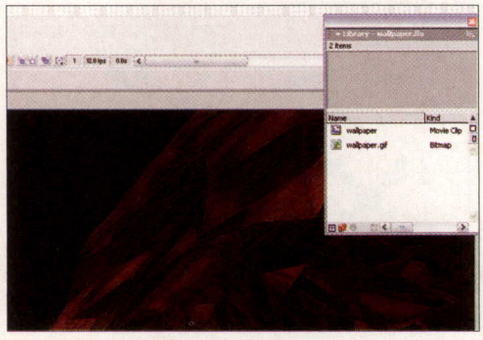


33 EXPORTING ICONS

Once each icon has its individual elements made into movie clips, you need to export the icon from the library for ActionScript. If you didn't do this when you created the icon, you can use the Library menu to access linkage. Now enter the identifier in the IconClip instance on the stage to have it appear.

34 ALTERING WINDOW CONTENT

To have the interface load your content, you need to create separate FLA files with that content. In the Windows subfolder for this tutorial are all the FLAs we used. You can use these or create your own, altering the size as needed – the windows adapt. Let the icons know where to find the content!



35 CHANGING THE WALLPAPER

The final step in customisation is adding your own wallpaper. Open wallpaper.fla, replace the image with one of your own and republish it. Perhaps you can have a number of files that can be chosen by the user or randomly loaded. You can also have Flash load JPEGs directly instead of using a SWF.

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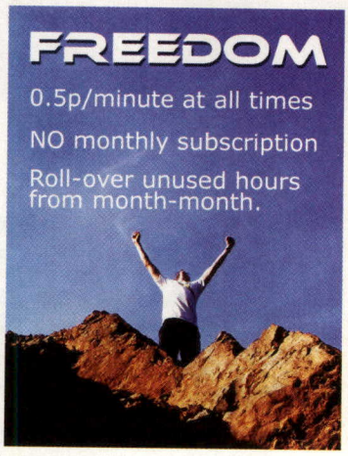

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TUTORIAL: FLASH
CREATE A COOL ANIMATED PRELOADER FOR YOUR SITE

THE EXPERT: LEE GROOMBRIDGE

Lee is the Digital Projects Manager for Highbury - Paragon, which means that he oversees the production of every magazine cover disc, and sees him tackling both Flash and Director on a daily basis. Lee has been using Flash professionally for over five years now, and has worked with clients like NTL, Tiscali and ITV's *Pop Idol*.

THE BRIEF

TUTORIAL OBJECTIVE
Create a visually pleasing preloader for a Flash-based Web site

SKILL LEVEL

TIME REQUIRED
30 minutes

ON THE DISC
Flash/Tutorials:
blank [folder]
finished [folder]

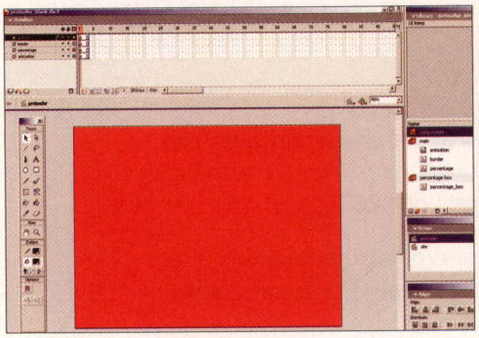
CREATE A COOL ANIMATED PRELOADER FOR YOUR SITE

Keep your visitors interested by entertaining them with some animated eye candy while they wait for your Web site to load

Every new version of Flash makes it easier to create visually attractive Web sites. But with the introduction of broadband, file size optimisation isn't always taken into account, and this can be a problem when slower machines with slower connections to the Net try to view these sites. Without a preloader, a visitor cannot gauge how long they'll have to wait for your site to load. If you want them to stick around and see your hard work, you need a preloader.

With this tutorial you'll learn to create a percentage-accurate preloader gauge and also see how to jazz it up. A great feature of the preloader you're about to create is that you can copy it into any future projects with ease. With some simple changes, you will never have to make a preloader from scratch again.

Basic knowledge of Flash MX authoring is assumed in this tutorial, and although all the code is supplied, it's also necessary for you to know how to use ActionScript. ■

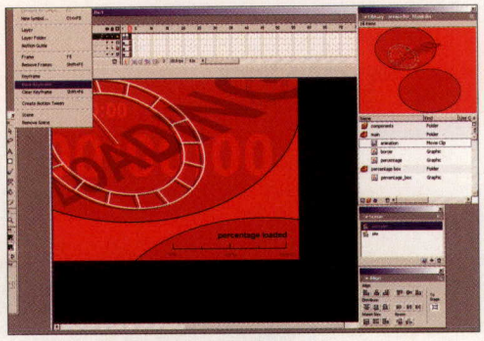


1 MAKING LIFE EASIER

Open the preloader_blank.fla file that's supplied on the CD-ROM. The first thing you'll realise is it's not so blank – the layers, Movie Properties and some library symbols are already set up for you. These elements are ready for use, so we can concentrate on the job of explaining the preloader.

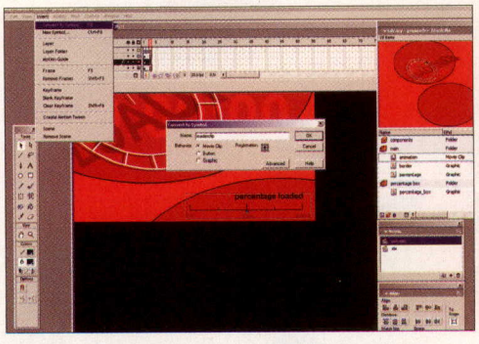
2 GET STARTED

Open the library by selecting Windows>Library. Drag all the symbols from the 'Main' in the library to their similarly named layers on the stage (eg drag the Border symbol to the Border layer). Arrange the symbols on the stage to get the layout of the preloader.



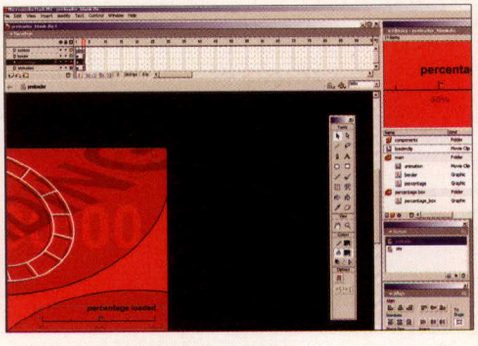
3 ADD BLANK KEYFRAMES

Select the layer named Actions and add two blank keyframes. Do this by selecting the frame on the layer and going to Insert>Blank Keyframe from the top menu. This is preparation for later and is where you will eventually place the ActionScript to make the preloader work.



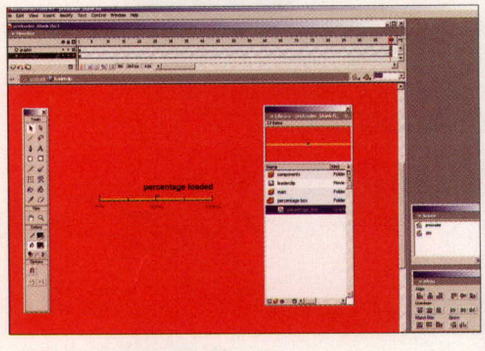
4 CREATE THE LOADER MOVIE CLIP

With the Arrow tool (press V) select the Percentage graphic symbol on the stage. Select Insert>Convert to Symbol from the menu. In the pop-up that appears type 'loader clip' in the Name field and click Movie Clip from the list of radio buttons. Click OK. You have now created your loader.



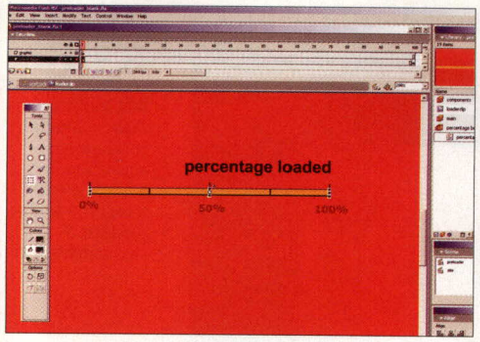
5 EDIT THE MOVIE CLIP

Now let's give the Instance of this movie clip a name. In the Properties panel type 'Loader' into the Instance Name field. With the Arrow tool select the loaderclip on the stage and select Edit>Edit Symbols. The other contents on the stage disappear, because you are now inside the loaderclip.



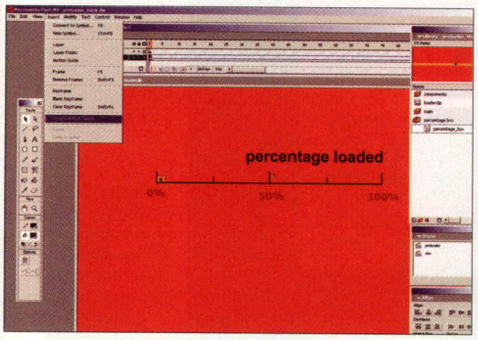
6 ADDING LAYERS

Add a layer into its timeline by selecting Insert>Layer. Rename the new empty layer 'percentage' and the layer with the Percentage graphic symbol 'graphics'. Place the Graphics layer above the other and add 100 frames to each layer. Place the Percentage_box from the library to the Percentage layer.



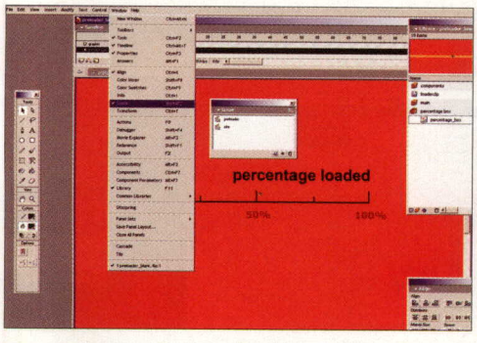
7 CREATING THE GROWING BAR

Select Frame 100 in the Percentage layer and insert a keyframe. With Frame 1 selected, click on the Percentage_box on the stage. Use the Free Transform tool (press Q) to scale the Percentage_box horizontally. The idea is to have the bar grow from 0% to 100% over the 100 frames.



8 CREATING THE MOTION TWEEN

Now select Frame 1 in the timeline and select Insert>Create Motion Tween from the menu. The frames should turb blue and an arrow will appear in them. Now if you scroll through the frames it should make the bar grow from 0% to 100% over the 100 frames.



9 GETTING TO GRIPS WITH SCENES

This preloader is to jump to the main site when it's fully loaded. To do this the preloader is created in a different scene to the main site. Select Window>Scene. A pop-up will appear with two scenes. The Site scene is a placeholder for your main site.

IN DETAIL: THE BANDWIDTH PROFILER

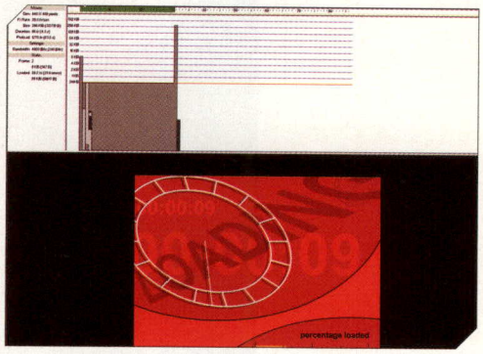
Use the Bandwidth Profiler to imitate a Web connection and test your movie under streaming conditions

In order for you to see how the Bandwidth Profiler works, it would be a great idea to see it in action on something relevant to you right now. So what better Flash movie to use than a finished version of the preloader you can create in this tutorial? By doing this you'll see exactly what it is you can create as well as seeing the Bandwidth Profiler in action. The finished Flash MX preloader is supplied to you on the cover CD-ROM. So start up Flash MX, then select File>Open and navigate your way to open Preloader_finished.fla.

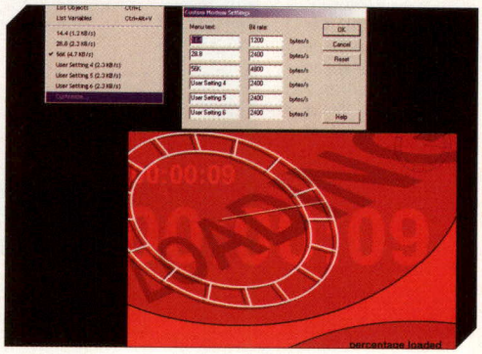
The next thing to do is test the movie. This will in turn open the Flash Player environment of Flash MX where the Bandwidth Profiler exists. If you select Control>Test Movie you will see a preview of the SWF file. You'll notice that the options available from the top menu have changed. You will also notice that the preloader did not show!

To imitate the movie loading and therefore see the preloader in action, you'll first need to imitate streaming. To show your movie streaming, go to the Debug menu and select the bit rate speed of 56Kb. You'll see a little tick appear by the side of the speed you've selected. You can customise the bit rate speeds available in this menu by selecting Debug, Customize. A pop-up will appear and you can type your desired speeds in.

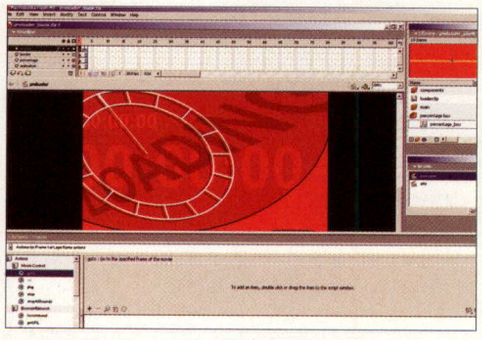
To view the streaming select View>Show Streaming. You will now see the preloader bar grow from 0% to 100% and then jump to the Site scene where the placeholder for the main site has been created. ■



■ The Flash Player Bandwidth Profiler is a great tool for discerning just how your animation will work on a variety of connections

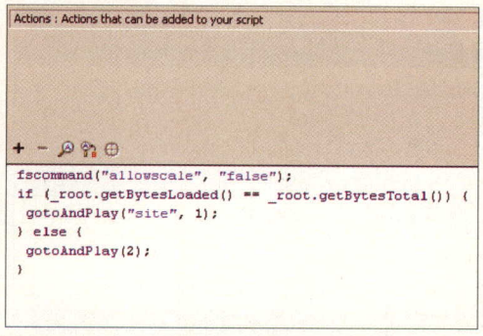


■ Change the settings in the intuitive menu, and you'll be able to get your computer to mimic any number of connection types instantly



10 NOW FOR ACTIONSCRIPTING

Select Frame 1 in the Preloader scene and click on the Action panel to open the ActionScripting environment. On the left you will see the Commands. Double-click these to add them to the scripting window on the right. To remove a command click the '-' button above the Scripting window.



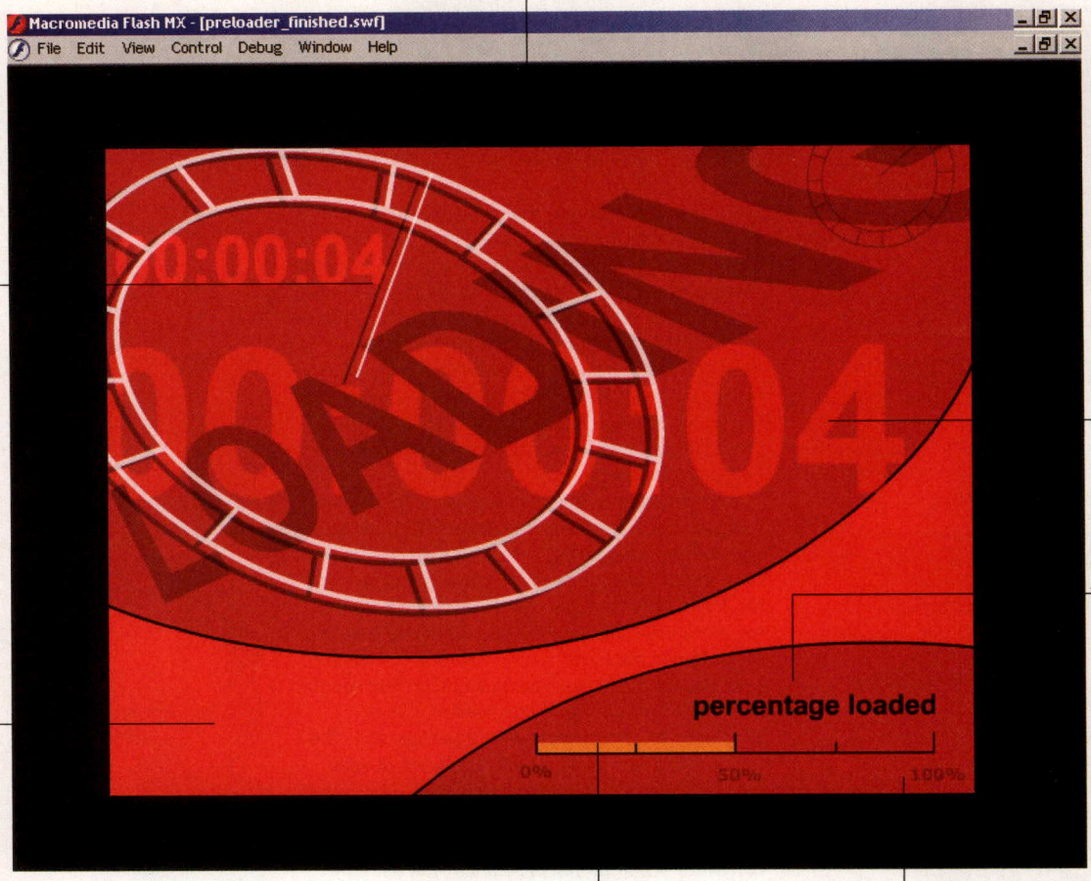
11 ACTIONS LAYER – THE FIRST FRAME

In the first empty keyframe of the Actions layer add this code so the movie will play at 100% size, and if it's loaded the preloader will not show. Make sure you set the Allowscale command to 'False'. The condition for the **if...end if** statement is '**_root.getBytesLoaded() == _root.getBytesTotal()**'.

TUTORIAL: FLASH
CREATE A COOL ANIMATED PRELOADER FOR YOUR SITE

Main movie
This is the main movie clip of the animation. It contains all the graphics and animations that loop continuously as the movie is loading

Border
This is a black border that covers the edges of the stage. This graphic is great for blocking content you want hidden as well as keeping things tidy



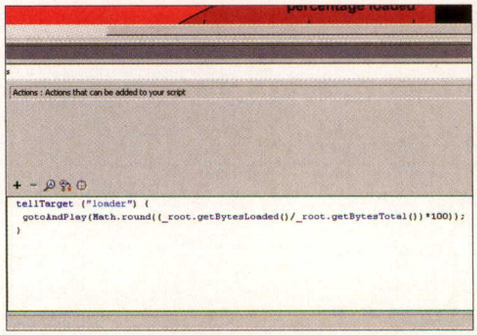
Vector component
One of the many vector components that make up the main animation. This number animation in particular scrolls through 0 to 9 to produce a stopwatch effect

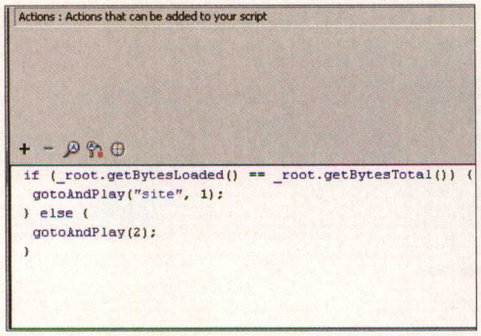
Loader clip
The Loader movie clip is in place so that ActionScript in the frames can be used to control the graphics of the preloader

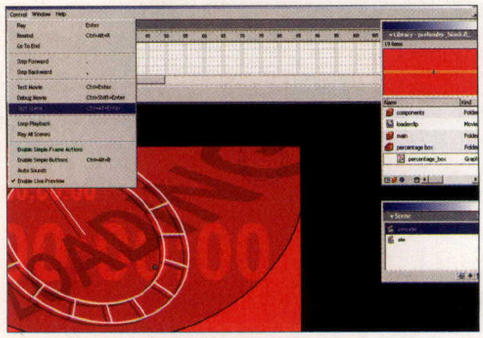
Numbers
The Percentage Gauge numbers are on the design so that as the Percentage Graphic grows it is obvious that it relates to how long is left for loading

Background colour
This area of colour is actually the background colour of the movie. It can only be altered using the Movie Properties option

Percentage Graphic
The Percentage Graphic animates by increasing in size accurately in proportion to the amount of the movie that has loaded. At 100%, the site has loaded







12 ACTIONS LAYER – THE SECOND FRAME

The line of code to go into Frame 2 tells the Loader movie clip to go to the frame that's the same as the percentage of bytes loaded (eg 50% loaded would send the movie clip to Frame 50.) The expression for the Frame field is '**Math.round((_root.getBytesLoaded()/_root.getBytesTotal())*100)**'.

13 ACTIONS LAYER – THE THIRD FRAME

The coding in this frame will either loop to Frame 2 if the site has not loaded or jump to the Site scene if the site has loaded. The code for the **if...end** if condition is '**_root.getBytesLoaded() == _root.getBytesTotal()** ' – the same condition that is in Frame 1 of the timeline.

14 ALL FINISHED

Your preloader is now finished. You can test it by selecting Control, Test Movie. If you do not see the preloader at first, don't panic. Select View>Show Streaming and you will see your completed preloader at work.

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*Plus registrar registration fee, see website for full details. **Monthly fee, must be paid annually.
†Monthly fee, must be paid annually and excludes one-off setup fee of £9.99.
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TUTORIAL: SOUND AND VISION
STREAM VIDEO TO YOUR WEB SITE WITH FLASH MX 2004

THE EXPERT: MARK SHUFFLEBOTTOM

Mark teaches on the BA Hons Interactive Media course at Bournemouth University, and has been a regular contributor to *Practical Internet Web Designer* for many issues. Although Mark comes from a print background – he is a former designer of *PI* – he is now much more involved in Web design technology, and specialises in everything from Flash design through to 3D graphics and PHP.

THE BRIEF

TUTORIAL OBJECTIVE
Use Flash MX 2004 Professional to work with streaming video

SKILL LEVEL

TIME REQUIRED
30 minutes

ON THE DISC
Digital video/ Tutorial files:
video finished [folder]
video start [finished]

STREAM VIDEO TO YOUR WEB SITE WITH FLASH MX 2004

Add streaming video to your Web site using Flash MX 2004 Professional and avoid the expense of a streaming Web server

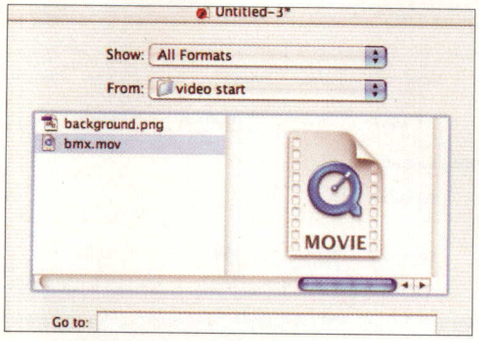
The new version of Flash has many new bells and whistles to play with, and one of the major improvements comes in the area of video. Flash can now crop video, which is great for all users of Mini DV, as this allows you to crop off the black borders which you don't normally see on a TV screen. As well as being able to scale video as in the previous version, there is also the ability to colour correct it, which is useful as some video looks quite dull on a computer monitor compared to your TV set. There are also features to specify the bandwidth level that you're aiming at.

The biggest improvement however, is that you can export video as an FLV file – which stands for Flash Video. This new format allows you to bring the video back into Flash so that the content streams right off a regular HTML server. Other advantages mean that this method can use longer video clips, as the video is stored in small sections and accessed dynamically. External FLV files can have different frame rates to the Flash file that you are loading it into, and FLV files can perform their own functions independently of the main Flash document, without interrupting playback.

In the tutorial we will use Flash MX Professional 2004, but you will be able to use the ordinary 2004 version to do this as well. You will learn how to export in the FLV format and then use new Actionscript code to stream the content back in again.

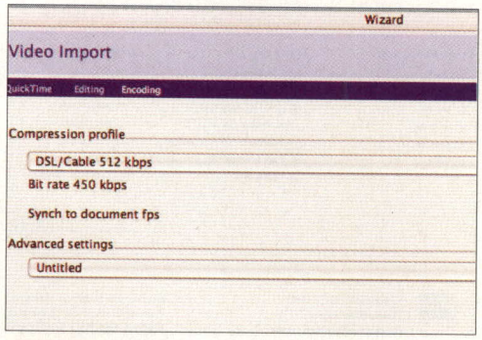
TUTORIAL: SOUND AND VISION

STREAM VIDEO TO YOUR WEB SITE WITH FLASH MX 2004



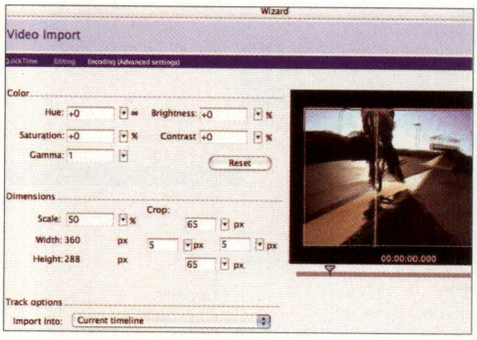
1 GETTING STARTED

Launch Flash MX 2004 and in the main Flash window create a new Flash document. We need to import the video for the tutorial, so click on the File menu and choose Import>Import to Stage, then browse for the bmx.mov from the Start Files folder on the cover CD.



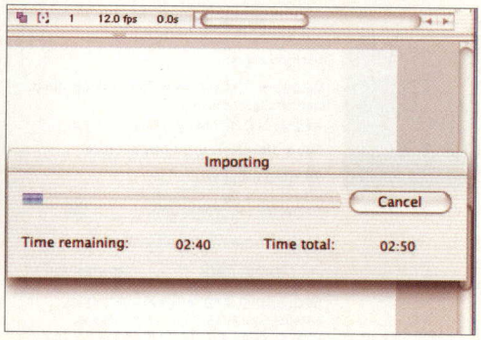
2 IMPORTING THE VIDEO

Click Import and in the Video Import wizard select the option to embed the clip. Now click Next. In the next window select the option to import the entire video and again click Next. In the Encoding screen, change the compression to DSL/Cable 512 kbps from the list.



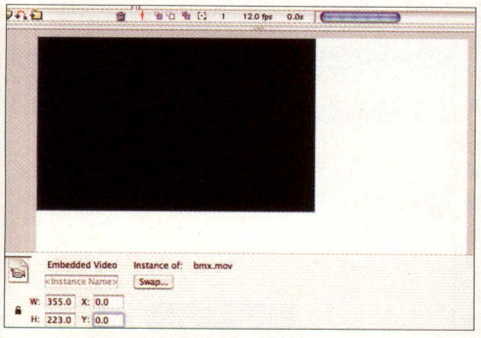
3 CREATE NEW PROFILE

In the Advanced settings, click the drop menu to create a new profile and you will be taken to a More Details page. Change the scale to 50%. In the Crop settings change the top and bottom to 65%, with the width 5% for the left and right. Change the audio track to None.



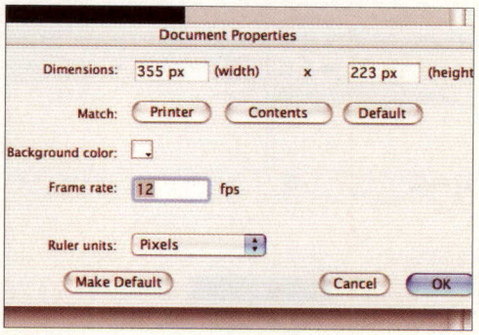
4 WATCH THE BAR

Click Next and you will be prompted to enter a name for the Encoding options for use later. You can click Next if you don't wish to name the settings. Back in the Encoding screen, click the Finish button and wait patiently as the video imports into your Flash document.



5 INCREASE THE TIMELINE

You will be prompted to increase the timeline to accommodate the video after the video has finished encoding. Click Yes to continue and the video will appear in the centre of the screen. In the Properties palette change the X and Y location to 0 pixels.



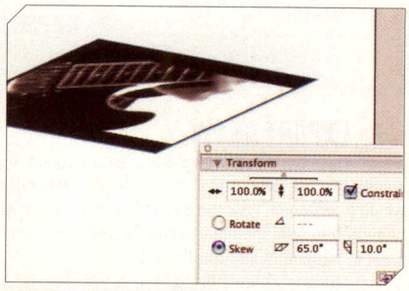
6 RESIZE THE DOCUMENT

Click off the video now and select the Size settings on the Properties palette. Change the document size to 355 pixels wide and 223 pixels high, then click OK to change. If your library is not visible press Control & L to open it on a PC or Apple & L to open on a Mac.

TECHNIQUE

VIDEO EFFECTS IN FLASH

Besides the FLV video, Flash can play back embedded clips in the document. This means that you can now create all manner of fancy dan effects for your digital movies, and all within the Flash interface.

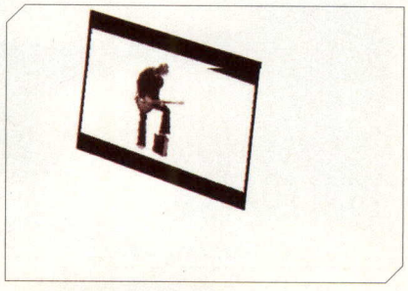


1 SKEW THE VIDEO

If you use your video-editing program to skew video you'll probably be looking at a lengthy rendering period, as the computer redraws all the frames and writes them back to the file. In Flash you can skew video with the Transform palette like any other graphic and it'll play back immediately.

2 USE A MASK

Don't be limited by the regular playback of video. Try placing a mask over the top to get different shape video, or even create an animated movie clip and use this as a masked layer over the top of the video. The results can be quite impressive.

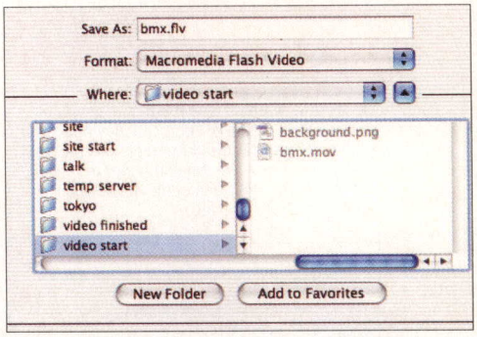


3 ANIMATED SKEWS

Convert your video into a movie clip and you can motion tween it like any other movie clip. Why not add several keyframes and motion tween the video moving between different skewed positions on the stage. This would take an age to render in After Effects.

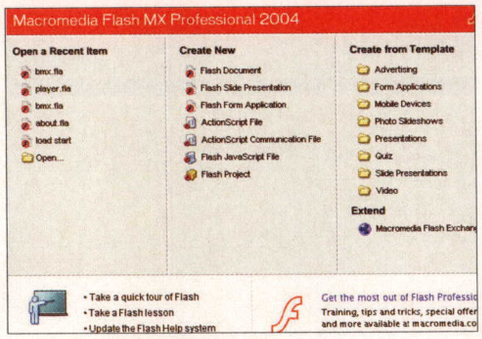
TUTORIAL: SOUND AND VISION

STREAM VIDEO TO YOUR WEB SITE WITH FLASH MX 2004



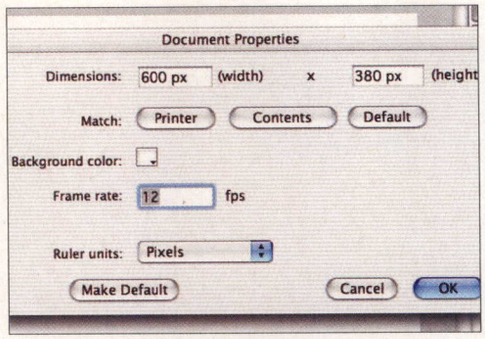
7 EXPORT AS FLV

Flash has its very own video export option; if you double-click the bmx.mov in the library, the Properties window will open. Click the Export button and you will be prompted to save the file. Name it 'bmx.flv' and save it in a suitable folder that you can find later.



8 SAVE YOUR FILE

Click the OK button to close the Video Properties, choose Save from the File menu and save your Flash document as 'BMX.fla' in the same folder as before. Close this file and create a new Flash document from the main Flash window.

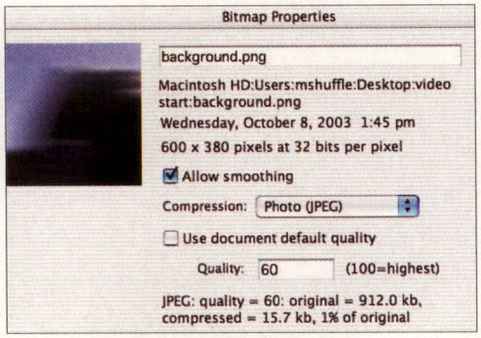


9 CHANGE THE DOCUMENT SIZE

When the new document opens click on the Document Size button in the Properties palette and change the document size to 600 pixels wide by 380 pixels high. Now click OK to return to the main Flash interface. This document will be the player which streams in the video.

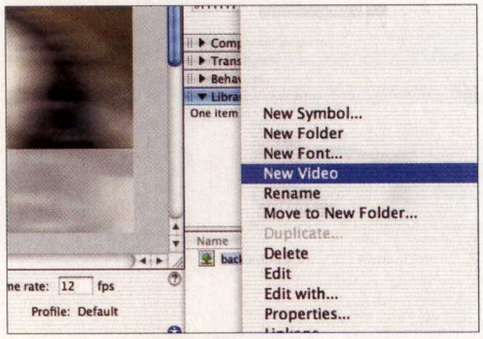
10 IMPORT TO STAGE

From the File menu choose Import>Import to Stage. In the browser select background.png from the Video Start folder on the cover CD. Click the Import button and the image should fill the stage exactly. If it doesn't, change the X and Y location to 0 pixels in the Properties palette.



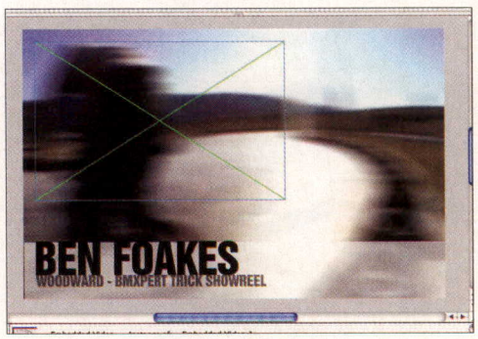
11 AMEND THE PROPERTIES

If you cannot see the library press Control & L on a PC or Apple & L on a Mac to open it. Double-click the background.png, deselect the Document Default quality and change it to 60. You can hit Test and see that it will be only 15.7Kb without any loss of quality.



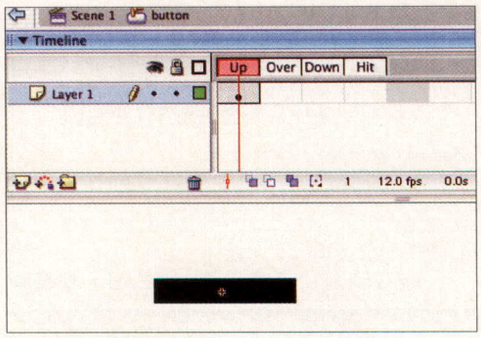
12 CREATE A NEW VIDEO

Click OK to leave the Image Properties. Now select the Library options from the top left of the Library palette. In the drop-down menu that appears select New Video and you'll see an embedded video clip appear in the library. Drag this clip onto the stage.



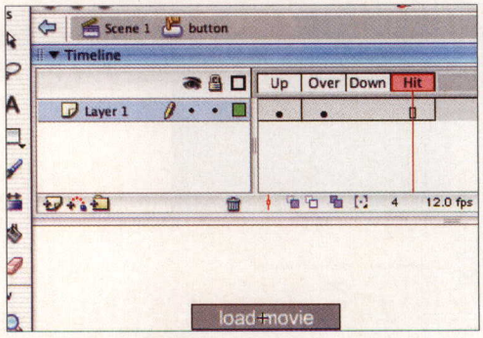
13 RESIZE THE CONTAINER

Click the lock on the Properties palette next to the width and height; now change the width to 355 and the height to 223. In the Instance box change the instance name to 'my_video' and click Return. Now position the video on the stage as shown above.



14 CREATE A BUTTON

In the bottom of the Library palette is an icon to create a new symbol. Click this and name it 'Button', making the behaviour of a button. Click OK and you will be presented with a new stage. Use the Rectangle tool to create a black rectangle as shown in the screenshot.

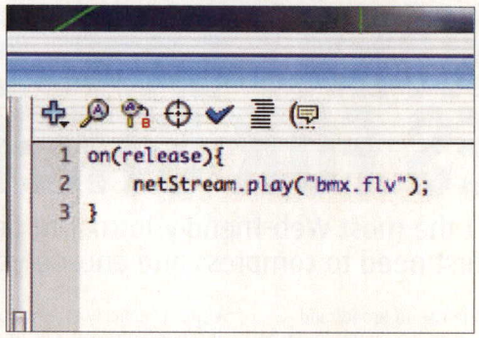


15 ADD SOME TEXT

Use the Text tool to add the words 'load movie'. Now select the Over state, press F6 to create a new keyframe and change the colour of the button to a mid grey with the Fill tool. Select the Hit state, press F5 and click the Scene 1 tab at the top of the document.

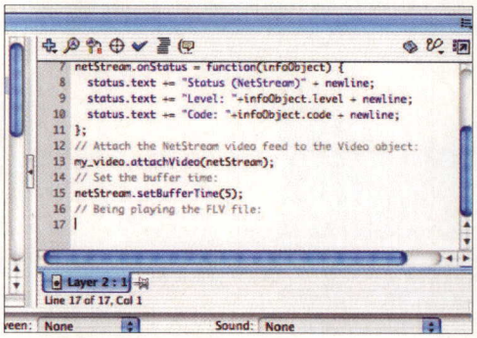
16 POSITION THE BUTTON

Back on the main scene you will see your button in the library. Select the button, drag it to the stage and position it on the right-hand side of the screen, lining up with the grey text on the title bar. If necessary resize the button so that it fits the height of the existing text.



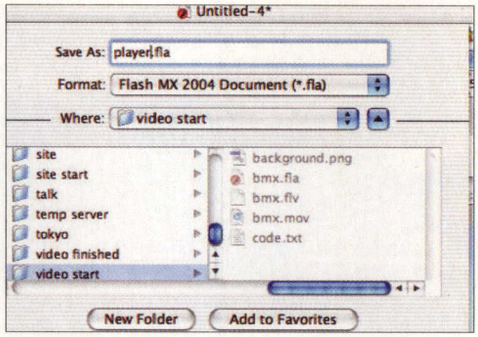
17 SCRIPT FOR THE BUTTON

With the button still selected press F9 to open the Action panel. From the above screenshot type in the exact coding as it is written. This will trigger the streaming video from the bmx.flv, provided that it is in the same directory as the HTML page on the Web server.



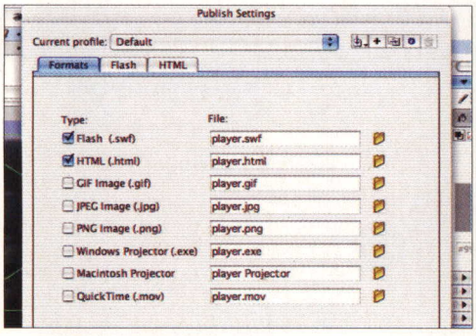
18 MORE CODING

Click on the New Layer icon in the timeline and a new layer will appear above the existing one. Select Frame 1 and press F9. Now open the text file code.txt from the cover CD, select all the code and copy it. Move back to Flash and paste the code into the Action panel.



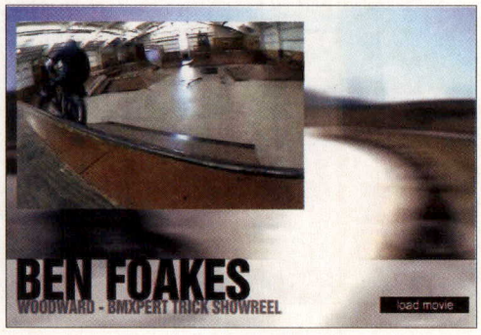
19 SAVE YOUR FILE

Close the Action panel now and from the File menu choose Save. Name the file 'player.fla' and make sure you save it in the same folder as your original bmx.flv file. The document is finished now, so all that's left to do is publish this content ready for the Web.



20 PUBLISH YOUR FILE

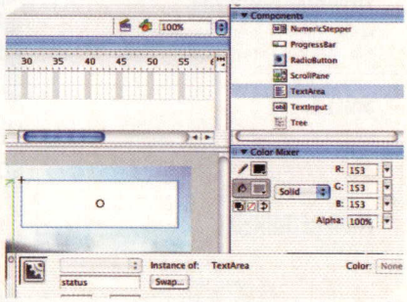
From the File menu choose Publish Settings. In the pop-up window make sure that both the Flash and HTML settings are ticked. You can click on the relevant tabs if you want more information, and then click the Publish button at the bottom of the window.



21 FLASH ENABLED

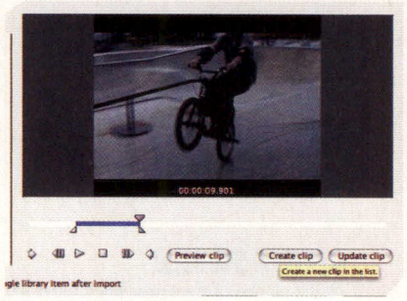
As long as you have the Flash Player 7 installed for your Web browser, you will be able to open the HTML page in your browser and view the fully working streaming media file. That concludes our introduction to creating streaming video content with Flash.

EXPERT ADVICE



ADDING A STATUS WINDOW

You can add a Status window which will inform your visitor what is going on while waiting for the file to load. This won't have much effect if you're running the video from your hard drive, but can provide essential feedback to the user online. From the Components window drag a text area onto the stage and resize it to fit in with the design. Give this text area an instance name of 'status' and press Return. Now publish your file again, and the text box will display what is going on to let the user know it isn't a dead link.



INDIVIDUAL CLIPS

Besides the regular import of an entire movie you can also import individual clips, which is ideal if you haven't got any software to edit your video on. When importing, choose the option to edit the video first then click the Next button. You can play through the media or scrub through with the playhead and use markers to show the start and finish of clips. After this click on the Create Clip button and repeat until you have all of your clips. Once done, continue with the rest of the import and you will have several clips awaiting you in the library.

YOUR NEXT MOVE

THE REAL THING

Learning to stream your first video clip in Flash MX 2004 is no mean feat, and you should feel rightly chuffed at completing this task. While this is great for getting your video streaming quickly and effectively, connoisseurs would recommend that you turn to more traditional routes for streaming movies. Real and QuickTime don't offer the same effects or customisation, but these are the methods used by the professionals for getting their streams online. Turn the page to find out how you can encode video files for use on the Web with each of these formats.

THE EXPERT: CHRIS SCHMIDT
Chris has been developing Web sites for nigh on ten years for clients ranging from the British Council through to the Brodsky Quartet. He is a joint partner in his own Web design company, track5 (**www.track5.co.uk**), and regularly contributes to various Web and graphic design magazines. Chris knows his way around most Web programs, but classes himself mostly as a Dreamweaver man.

THE BRIEF

TUTORIAL OBJECTIVE
Encode video clips into QuickTime and RealVideo formats

SKILL LEVEL

TIME REQUIRED
One hour

ON THE DISC
Bonus software: horses.avi [this is a slightly smaller 28Mb version of the 50Mb clip used in the tutorial]

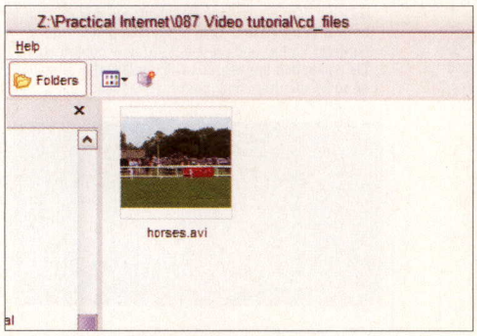
CONVERT LARGE VIDEO FILES FOR STREAMING

Video isn't the most Web-friendly format to be distributing, so you'll first need to compress and encode your files...

With the rise in broadband connectivity, many film-makers will be turning to the Net to deliver their next box office hit. But despite the advantages of these connection speeds, you still have to reduce file sizes.

With five minutes of DV taking about 1Gb of storage capacity, the average site visitor is unlikely to download movies in this format. Fortunately, there are options available for reducing this to a size that can be streamed relatively quickly.

This tutorial will show how to convert video into both QuickTime and RealVideo formats that you can upload to your Web server for integration into your site. We've chosen these formats as they provide the most common methods of delivering video online, although Flash is increasingly becoming part of the equation (flick to page 72 for more on this). We'll also look at methods of converting your clips and configuring things so you get the optimum performance from your files.

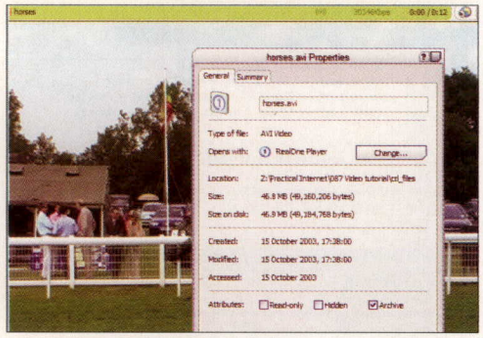


1 GETTING STARTED

As the process of creating a video clip is the subject of an entire magazine (never mind another tutorial), we're starting with a file called horses.avi - you'll find a version of our huge clip on the CD. Copy this to your system before you do anything else.

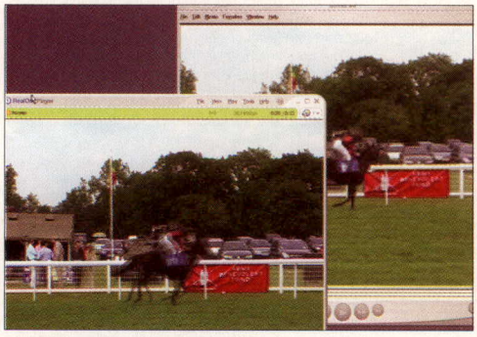
2 AT THE RACES

Run the file to view the contents, and you'll find the file will play back in whatever application your system has reserved to identify the .AVI format. We have Real configured but you may find QuickTime or Windows Media provides access. Familiarise yourself with the content.



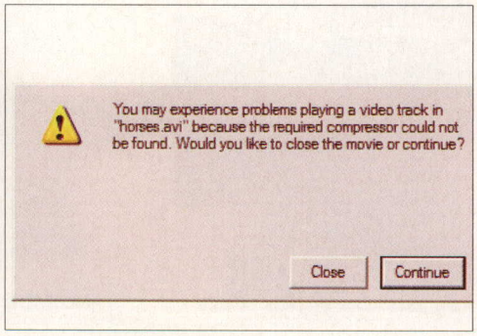
3 VIDEO PROPERTIES

The file we're using has relatively large dimensions (720x576) as well as weighing in at around 48Mb. We could reduce the size in Adobe Premiere Pro, but we want to discover how to encode a video clip of any size for use on the Web - so the clip on the disc will do just as nicely here.



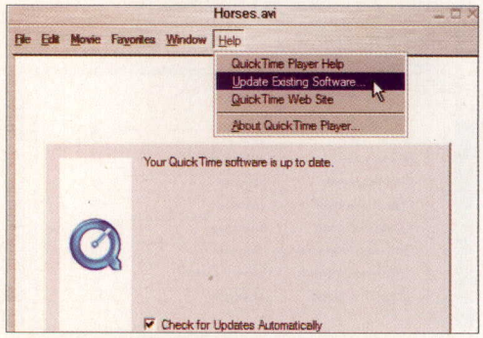
4 TESTING CODECS

Before we continue, it's a good idea to make sure your software recognises the codecs used in the creation of the original file. As we'll be looking at the conversion process through both Real and QuickTime, we can easily tell whether the original file will play back effectively.



5 ERROR MESSAGE

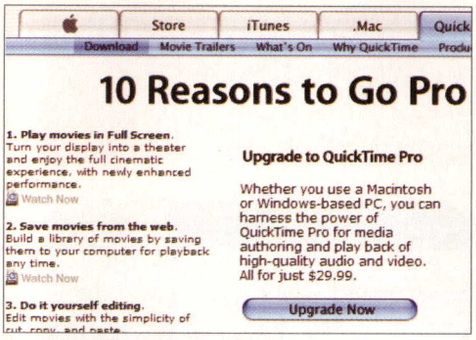
QuickTime can be quite fussy with AVI files, due to the format's PC roots. If you find a clip cannot be played back, you will only see a blank interface and an Alert box informing you of the situation.



6 DON'T PANIC

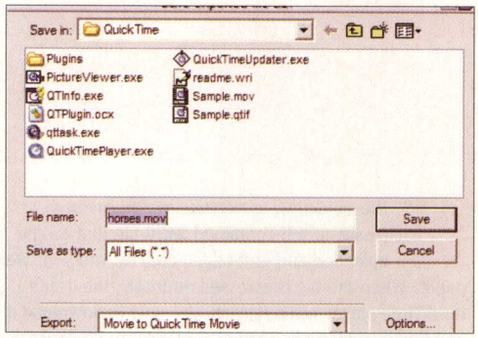
Before you get too worried however, check out the Help menu which contains the option to Update Existing Software. Run this and try again if necessary, or pay a visit to the QuickTime site for advice more specific to the codec you are trying to run.

TUTORIAL: SOUND AND VISION
CONVERT LARGE VIDEO FILES FOR STREAMING



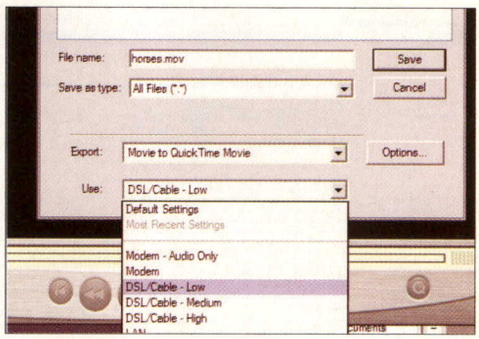
7 USING QUICKTIME

To convert the file through QuickTime you'll need to have access to the QuickTime Pro, as the basic free player will not allow the conversion process. At just $30 (around £18) this is a small price to pay, although you may already have this if you're serious about your video.



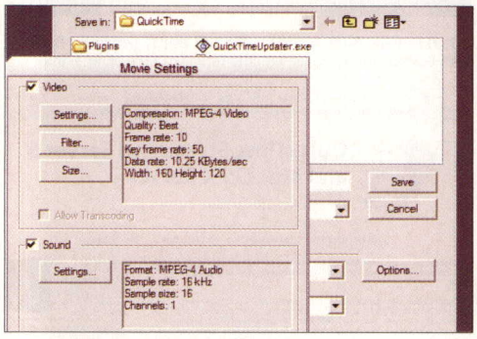
8 EXPORT STRENGTH

Open the horses.avi file in QuickTime Pro and head over to the File menu. Choose the Export option and you'll be presented with a dialog box offering options for your conversion to QuickTime's .MOV proprietary format. Name the file and navigate to your intended destination.



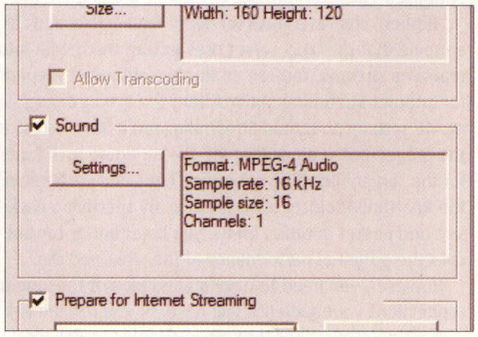
9 FORMAT SETTINGS

Before saving the file, check the Export options are set to 'Movie to Quick Time Movie' and choose the DSL/Cable – Medium option from the Use drop-down to configure the basic settings required for our purposes. This will provide a reasonable balance between quality and file size.



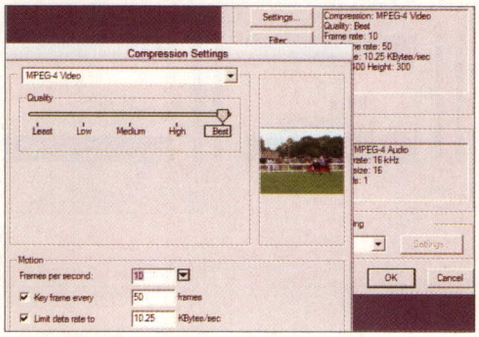
10 BASIC CONVERSION

At this point you can quite happily hit the Save button to start the encoding process for this basic conversion. However, you won't necessarily be making the most of the compression so click the Options button to access these more advanced options.



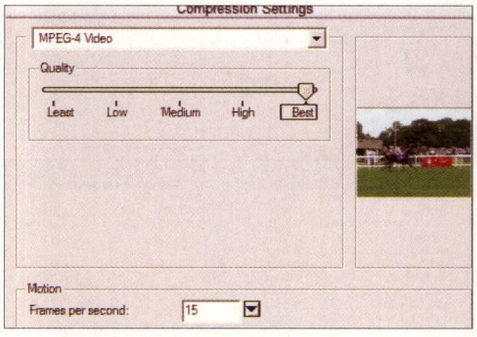
11 BEHIND THE SCENES

The seemingly basic interface this prompts hides a multitude of controls. Keeping the Video and Sound options checked will include these elements in your conversion, while the Prepare for Internet Streaming option will allow options for such a purpose.



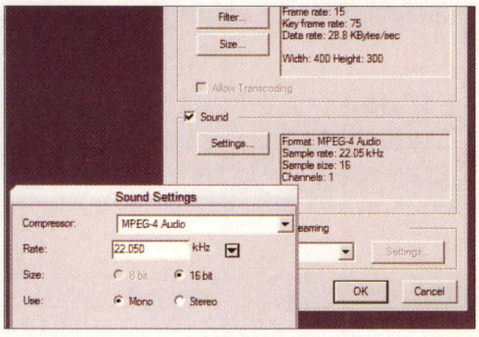
12 VIDEO OPTIONS

Halve the size of the clip down to 400x300 via the Size button and take a moment to look through the Filter options, which will be of interest to filmmakers. For the most control of your compression, however, turn to the Settings button.



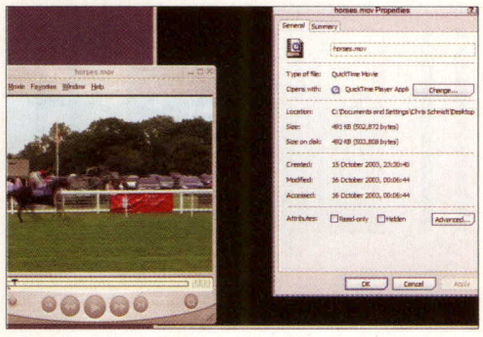
13 COMPRESSION SETTINGS

From here you can choose the compression method and its quality settings. We found MPEG-4 Video set to Best Quality worked well, although you may need to experiment with other clips. Reducing the frame rate will also help to reduce the file size – we've set this to 15 frames per second.



14 AUDIO CONFIGURATION

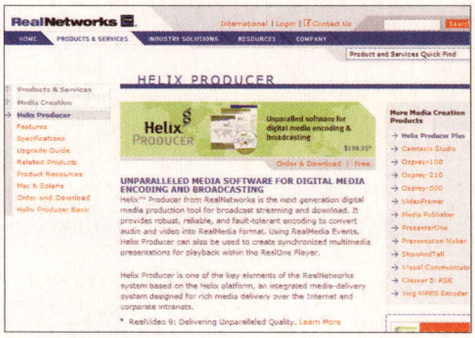
Adjusting the Sound settings also helps to reduce the converted file's size. MPEG-4 Audio complements the video compression, and halving the bit rate down to 22.505KHz and using mono sound loses negligible quality compared to the benefits experienced in file size.



15 SAVE THE FILE

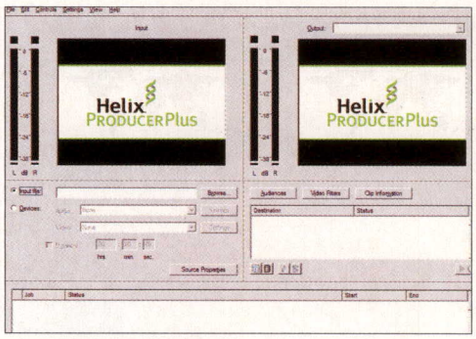
As our clip is intended for pseudo streaming, set the Internet Streaming option to Fast Start and OK the configuration. This will return you to the initial Export dialog from where you can save the file from the 28Mb original into something a whole lot smaller.

TUTORIAL: SOUND AND VISION
CONVERT LARGE VIDEO FILES FOR STREAMING



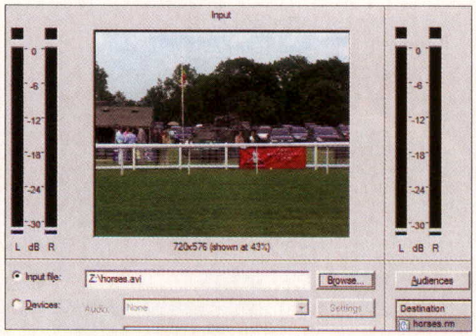
16 KEEP IT REAL

If Real is your preferred delivery method, you'll need to turn to the Helix Producer software. A free basic version is available from www.realnetworks.com/products/producer. The following steps are carried out in the more advanced Plus version, as this has a greater feature set.



17 INTO THE HELIX

At first glance the Helix Producer interface can be somewhat daunting, but the conversion process is quite straightforward and no more difficult than using QuickTime. Have a look at the annotated screenshot on page 80 to see in more detail how the interface is organised.



18 LOCATE THE CLIP

The interface is split between Input options on the left and Output to the right. Keep the Input File radio button selected and click the Browse button to locate the horses.avi clip on your hard drive. Click OK and you'll return to the Producer interface with the clip previewed.

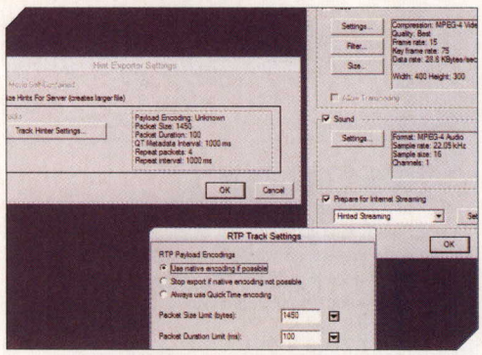
IN DETAIL: COMPRESSING MOVIES FOR STREAMING

Our basic conversion is fine for pseudo streams, but how do you use it with the QuickTime Streaming Server?

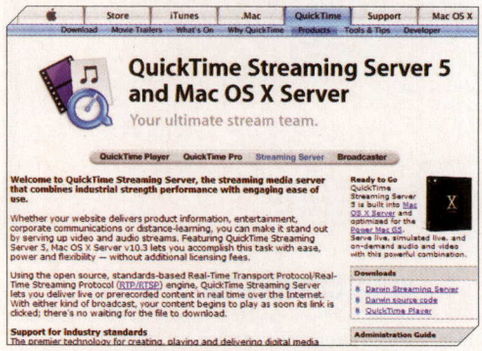
The QuickTime conversion we've covered creates a self-contained .MOV file that can be uploaded and embedded directly into your Web pages. When the file is accessed remotely, the user's QuickTime player will automatically start to download it and begin playback as soon as it calculates a balance between the download speed and the user's connection. This is known as 'pseudo streaming' as the file is being delivered through a regular HTTP server (see our main feature, page 20, for more on the streaming process). If you want a purer stream, eg through the QuickTime Streaming Server (QTSS), you should use a Web-optimised video compressor to convert the original file.

'Hinting' creates a track for every streamable track in a movie that the QTSS server uses to turn the media into real-time streams. You can do this by setting the Prepare for Internet Streaming options from the Export dialog's movie settings to Hinted Streaming. You'll have access to the greyed-out settings that let you configure such hints for the server, including optimising hints and determining the RealTime Protocol track settings. By specifying packet size and packet duration limits, you'll get better control over the potential performance of the streamed clip.

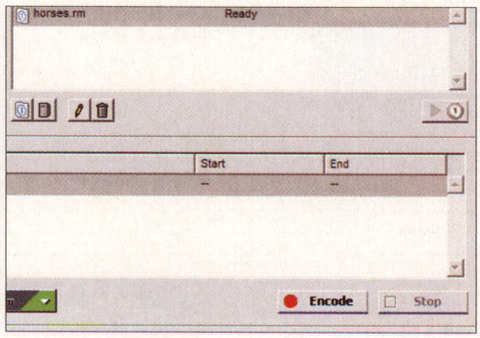
However, you need to have a good idea of the kind of connections your audience will have, or you run the risk of creating conversions that are impossible to deliver online effectively. If in doubt, stick with the default settings and experiment with minor amendments to your conversions. It can take time, as each video has its own attributes, but you'll soon figure it out and anticipate potential problems to provide the best conversion.



If at first you don't succeed... The best way to get great results with QuickTime is to tinker with the settings a little bit at a time

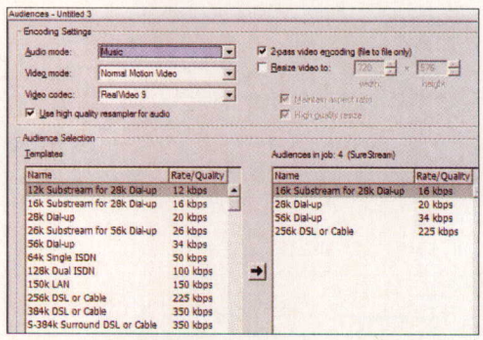


If you want to stream your video files properly, then the QuickTime Streaming Server should prove extremely beneficial



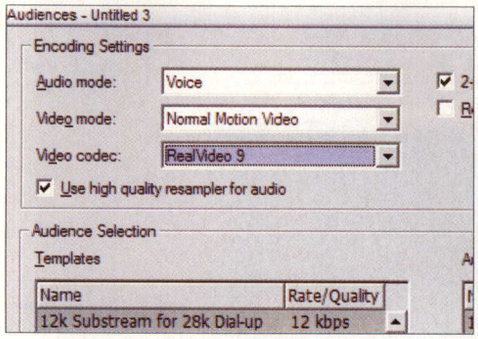
19 GOOD TO GO

At this point you could simply hit the Encode button found toward the bottom right of the interface to run the conversion using the default configuration, but – as with QuickTime – this won't necessarily provide the best encoding or compression.



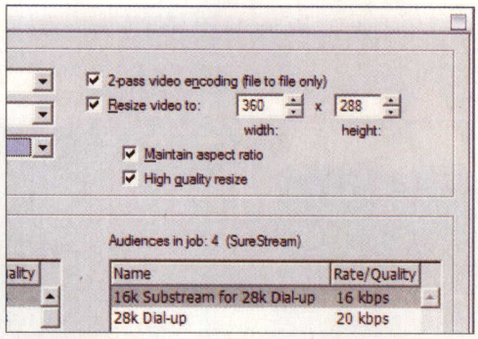
20 MEET THE AUDIENCE

Instead, turn to the Audiences option in the right-hand Output area. Clicking on this button presents options for your encoding settings and includes some pretty impressive features, especially when you consider the variation in connection speeds your potential visitor might require.



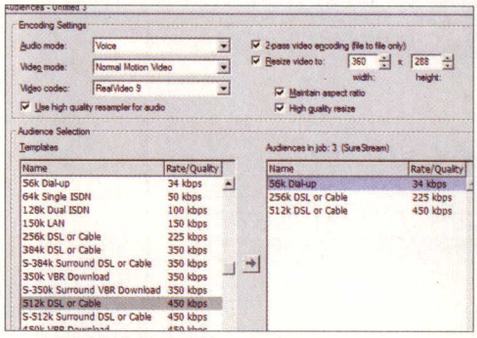
21 ENCODING SETTINGS

The head of the Audiences options allows you to specify audio and video modes. We knocked the Audio down to Voice as there is no music involved in the clip, and left the Video mode and codec to Normal Motion Video and RealVideo 9 respectively.



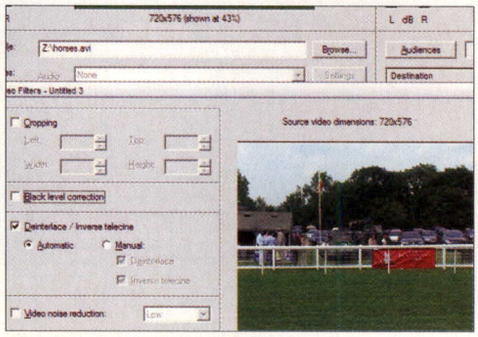
22 SMALLER IS BETTER

Checking the Resize Video To option allows us to scale the conversion down to reduce the encoded file's size considerably. Keep the Maintain Aspect Ratio option checked and halve the width dimension to 360, and Helix will automatically calculate the appropriate height.



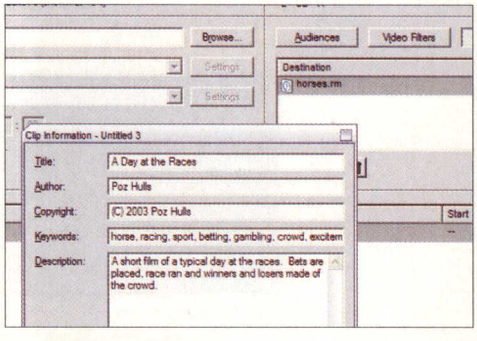
23 CHOOSE YOUR AUDIENCE

The Audience Selection option is the clever bit. Real uses a process called 'SureStream' that lets you convert a single clip which is compatible with various bandwidth settings. We've settled at 56Kb dial-up plus 256Kb and 512Kb DSL connections, selected from the left-hand templates.



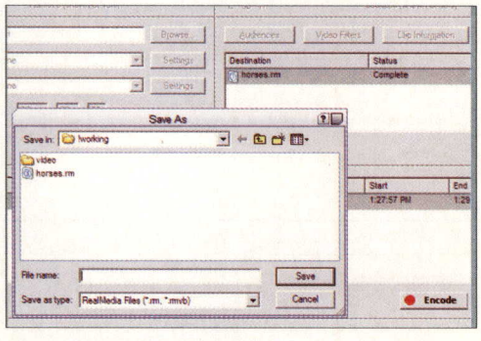
24 RUNNING FILTERS

Another similarity with QuickTime is the support for Video Filters accessed through the button in the Output options. This provides basic controls such as cropping and level or noise correction, but unless you have some video production experience it's best to leave these at their default settings.



25 META DATA

Finally, you can decide whether to add Clip Information via the appropriately named button within the Output options. Including information such as title and description allows the end users' RealPlayer app to display such credits, as well as offering meta information and ratings.



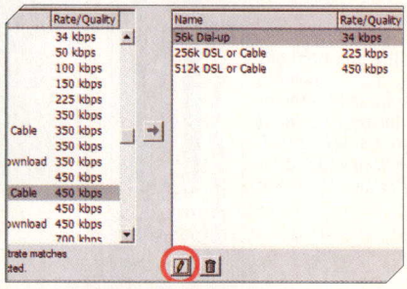
26 ENCODE THE CLIP

All that's left now is to specify a location for your converted file via the RealOne icon below the Destination table and to hit the Encode button found at the bottom right of the interface. The end result is a 1.12Mb file that runs effectively through various connection speeds.

TECHNIQUE

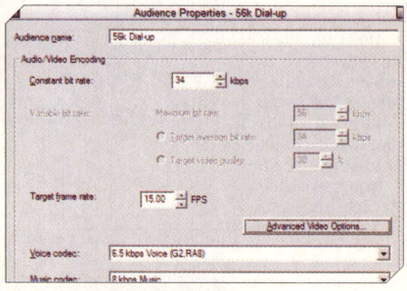
REFINING YOUR AUDIENCE

Using the default audience settings is generally fine for specifying your potential SureStream audience. But if you need to further adjust the settings to suit more specific connection speeds, you can easily modify existing configurations.



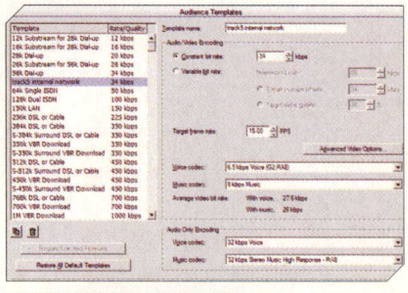
1 AUDIENCE SELECTION

Go back into your clip's Audiences settings and cast your eye towards the bottom of the dialog box. The Trash Can will remove a preselected audience, while the Pencil icon allows further configuration. Click on this to access the selected connection settings.



2 UNDER THE BONNET

Many of the options should be familiar if you're used to video editing, and you can easily make some comprehensive changes to the compression and encoding settings used during your clip's conversion. Once you've completed your changes, either OK them or use the Save as Template option to create a new one.



3 AVAILABLE AUDIENCE

You'll then be returned to the main Audiences interface where you'll find your amended settings available within the left-hand templates list. If you need more overall control over these templates, simply double-click on any entry to access such global options.

TUTORIAL: SOUND AND VISION
CONVERT LARGE VIDEO FILES FOR STREAMING

Preview pane
The left-hand side of the interface provides controls over the input of your file and is headed by a generous preview pane of your original clip

Output options
The output options are logically contained towards the right. The bars to the left of both preview screens gives some visual indication of your audio levels

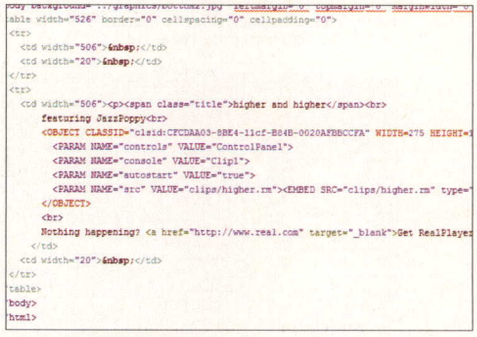
Configuration options
The three buttons available here provide routine configuration options for your clip, while the destination table keeps tracks of any jobs currently being worked on

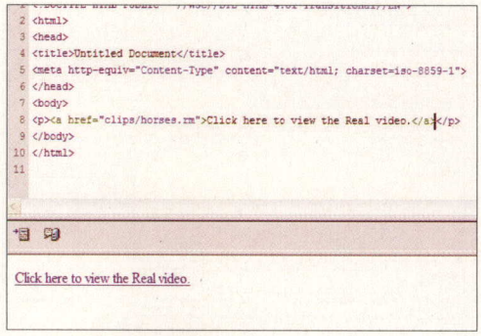
Input options
The input options can be pointed toward a local file or to source content from a device such as a Web camera for dynamic conversion

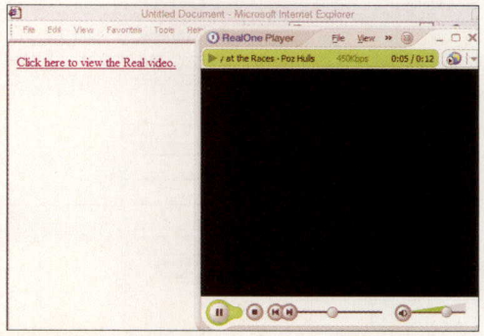
Icons
The innocuous icons at the foot of the table provide controls for specifying the location of your converted file and preview playback within RealPlayer

Multiple jobs
Helix Producer Plus allows you to work on multiple jobs at the same time. New jobs are listed within the lower table so you can easily switch from one to another

Encode button
The all-important Encode button can be found at the bottom right of the interface. Hit this when you've completed your configuration and let Helix Producer convert your clip







27 PUT ONLINE
There are various methods of embedding such video clips into your existing Web pages, but this is the subject of another tutorial, due to the various parameters commonly used with the **<object>** and **<embed>** tags.

28 KEEP IT SIMPLE
A much easier method however, is to make use of the simple link or anchor tag. By pointing such a link directly to the location of the converted clip in relation to the current page, RealPlayer will intercept the download and play things back through the software.

29 FINAL RESULT
You may want to consider creating variations of the QuickTime clip for users to choose their appropriate connection speeds. Real, on the other hand, with its SureStream support will intelligently deliver the most appropriate option.

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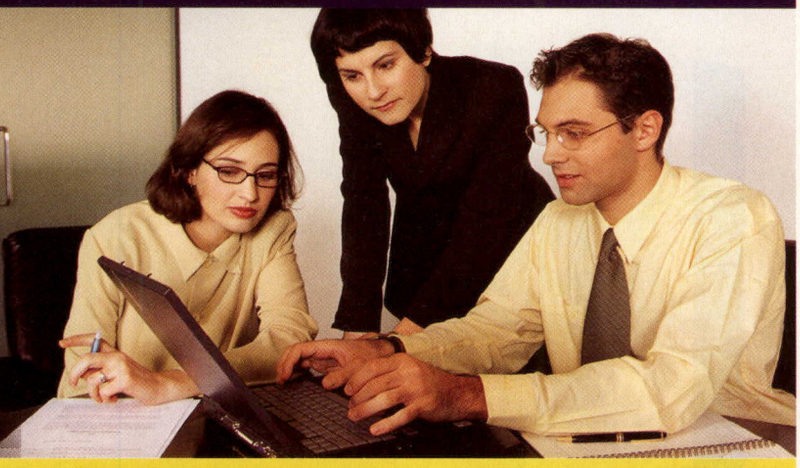

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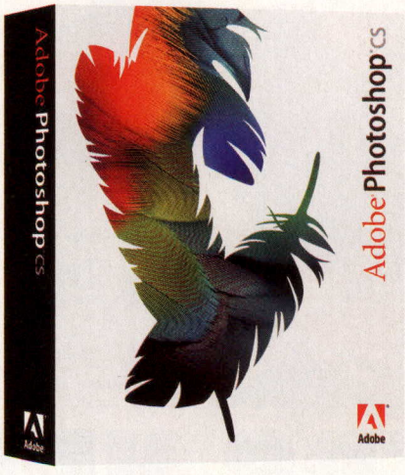
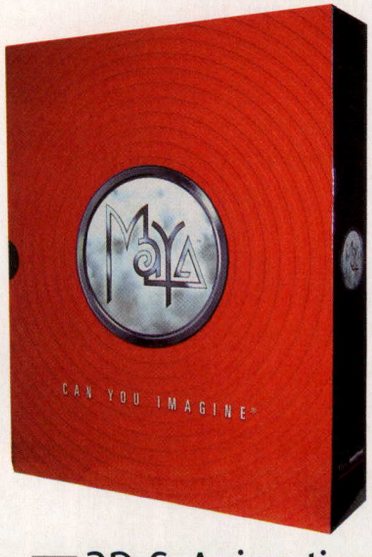


Digital Imaging

YES.



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THE EXPERT: RACHEL ANDREW

Rachel is a director of Web development company edgeofmyseat.com (**www.edgeofmyseat.com**), and is currently a member of the Web Standards Project (**www.webstandards.org**). With years of Webmaster experience, she has co-written a number of books for Glasshaus (**www.glasshaus.com**) on Web development, the most recent of which was *Dreamweaver MX Design Projects*.

THE BRIEF

TUTORIAL OBJECTIVE

Create database tables and display a category listing menu.

SKILL LEVEL

TIME REQUIRED

60 minutes

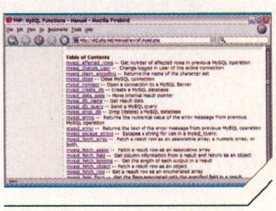
ON THE DISC

Developer/ Tutorial files: global.css test.php

CODING TIP

USING MYSQL FUNCTIONS IN PHP

In connecting to and retrieving data from the database, we are using some of PHP's inbuilt MySQL functions. PHP has functions for many databases in addition to MySQL. You can read about the MySQL functions in more depth in the PHP manual: **uk2.php.net/manual/en/ref.mysql.php**. This online manual is a good place to become acquainted with PHP, as users can add comments to the different pages. If someone spots a problem with a particular function or works out a good way to use it, they will often post it. The answer to your PHP problems may well be found here.



PART TWO

BUILD A CONTENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

In part two of this series of tutorials we begin the process of designing and developing a Content Management System

In this second tutorial in the series, we will begin to build our Content Management System. The system we'll be building could be used as a standalone site or incorporated into an existing one – for example, to give users the ability to maintain a list of articles or news items on the site.

When starting to build any application it is important to understand the requirements and plan the application so that it meets them. For our purposes we would like to have a Web site that allows non-technical users to administer articles which are then posted to the site for visitors to read.

In order to achieve this we are going to build a simple CMS that allows administrators to log into an admin section and add, edit and delete articles which are organised into categories. Administrators may also add and edit the categories within which the articles are stored.

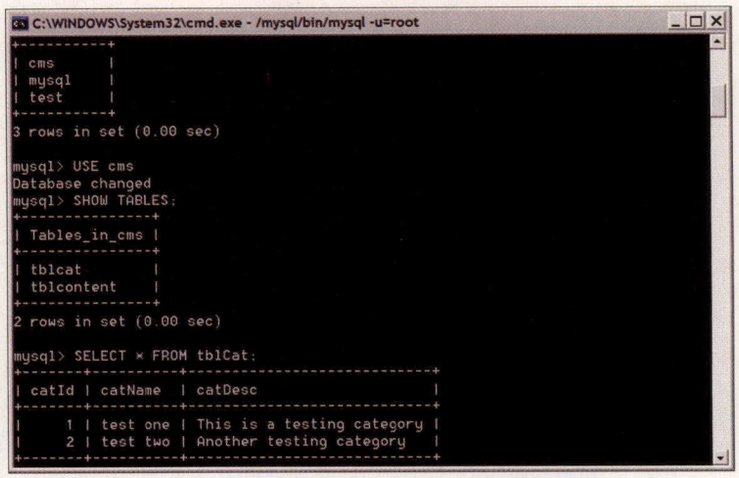
From a visitor's point of view, they will be able to come to the site, select a category from the menu and read the articles held within that category. Our Category list will become the main menu for the site – but it could also be used as a sub-menu if you were implementing this CMS as part of a larger site. Later in this series of tutorials we will be implementing a Search feature so that visitors can search the articles we have available and find information which is relevant to them.

This is a relatively simple system, and yet if you follow this tutorial you will find it covers techniques that are common to many tasks that you'll want to achieve with PHP and MySQL. We will be looking at basic database design and usage – how to work with MySQL at the command line and through your PHP pages.

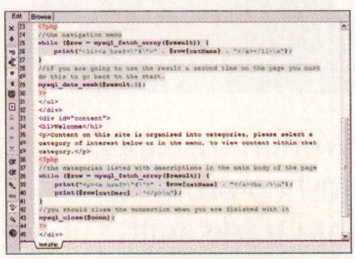
We'll also be covering many PHP functions that relate to MySQL databases as well as other programming constructs such as arrays and loops. Finally, we'll be looking at how to create a database-driven log-in system for the administration area. All these skills are useful for a variety of projects.

To begin developing your CMS you will need to have set up PHP, Apache and MySQL as described in last issue's tutorial. We will be giving you instructions on how to create the tables, assuming you are working at the command line with MySQL. If you have downloaded and installed the MySQL Control Center or other GUI, you can use that to create your tables if you prefer.

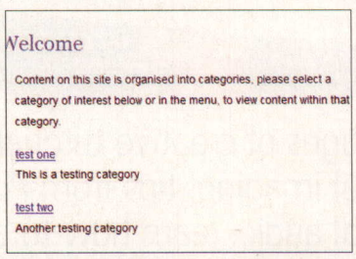
You should have set up a site in Apache to install all your CMS files. As long as you have a working Web server, PHP and MySQL installation, you should be able to follow these articles whether you are working on Mac OS X, a PC running Windows or some form of Linux or Unix Operating System. This cross-platform nature is one good reason to choose PHP as a scripting language as opposed to ASP. ■



■ Retrieve the data from your tables using a variety MySQL commands



■ Take your MySQL data and output it into Web page with the help of a little PHP



■ Hey presto, as if by magic – the results of your first CMS endeavours with PHP and MySQL

THE CODE

DESCRIPTION

Follow the steps below to create the basis for your content management system using PHP and MySQL.

1 Log into MySQL, either at the Command Line or using the MySQL Control Center or other GUI. Create a new database called 'cms'. Now switch to that database.

```
mysql> CREATE DATABASE cms;
mysql> USE cms;
```

2 Create the table that will store the content for your pages.

```
mysql> CREATE TABLE tblContent (
contentId INT NOT NULL AUTO_INCREMENT PRIMARY KEY,
contentTitle VARCHAR(255),
contentText TEXT,
catId INT);
```

3 Create the table that will store the categories. We will use the Primary Key of **tblCat** to link the tables, inserting that value into the field **catId** in **tblContent** to show which category that content belongs within.

```
mysql> CREATE TABLE tblCat (
catId INT NOT NULL AUTO_INCREMENT PRIMARY KEY,
catName VARCHAR(100),
catDesc TEXT);
```

4 Insert two test categories into **tblCat**. We'll initially insert data directly in the database so we can check that everything is working properly. After doing the two **INSERT** statements, do **SELECT * FROM tblCat** to view the data you've just inserted – you should see that MySQL has added the number in **catId** automatically.

```
mysql> INSERT INTO tblCat (catName, catDesc) VALUES ('test one', 'This is a testing category');
mysql> INSERT INTO tblCat (catName, catDesc) VALUES ('test two', 'Another testing category');
mysql> SELECT * FROM tblCat;
```

5 Insert three rows of dummy content into the database. The fields **contentTitle** and **contentText** are fairly self-explanatory as the title and content of your item; **catId** is the ID of the category you want the article to be under. We've inserted two rows under **CatId 1,** which is the test category 'test one', and one under **2** – 'test two'.

```
mysql> INSERT INTO tblContent (contentTitle, contentText, catId) VALUES ('Item One', 'This is
some dummy content',1);
mysql> INSERT INTO tblContent (contentTitle, contentText, catId) VALUES ('Item Two', 'This is the
second item of dummy content',1);
mysql> INSERT INTO tblContent (contentTitle, contentText, catId) VALUES ('Item Three', 'This is
the third item of dummy content',2);
```

6 Save a page into the site as 'test.php'. Add this PHP code, which makes a connection to the database. Replace 'user' with your database user, 'pwd' with your password. PHP code is wrapped in **<?php ?>** tags; any PHP you want parsed by the server must be within these tags.

```
<?php
$conn = mysql_connect("localhost","user","pwd");
mysql_select_db("cms", $conn);
?>
```

7 To retrieve a list of categories from the database, add this line inside the PHP tags.

```
$result = mysql_query("SELECT * FROM tblCat", $conn);
```

8 We can now print out our categories to the page. In the body of your HTML page add this code block, which loops through the available data and prints each row to the screen.

```
<?php
while ($row = mysql_fetch_array($result)) {
        print($row[catName] . "<br />\n");
}
?>
```

9 We can use this code to form the basis of our Category menu. This page is also on the CD along with the stylesheet. Simply change the database connection details to use it.

```
//query the database for a list of categories
$result = mysql_query("SELECT catID, catName, catDesc FROM tblCat", $conn);
?><!DOCTYPE html PUBLIC "-//W3C//DTD XHTML 1.0 Transitional//EN"
        "http://www.w3.org/TR/xhtml1/DTD/xhtml1-transitional.dtd">

<html>
<head>
<title>CMS Homepage</title>
<link rel="stylesheet" type="text/css" href="global.css" />
</head>

<body>
<div id="banner">
<p> </p>
</div>
<div id="navigation">
<ul class="main">
<?php
//the navigation menu
while ($row = mysql_fetch_array($result)) {
        print("<li><a href=\"#\">" . $row[catName] . "</a></li>\n");
}
//if you are going to use the result a second time on the page you must do this to go back to
the start.
mysql_data_seek($result,0);
?>
</ul>
</div>
<div id="content">
<h1>Welcome</h1>
<p>Content on this site is organised into categories, please select a category of interest below
or in the menu, to view content within that category.</p>
<?php
//the categories listed with descriptions in the main body of the page
while ($row = mysql_fetch_array($result)) {
        print("<p><a href=\"#\">" . $row[catName] . "</a><br />\n");
        print($row[catDesc] . "</p>\n");
}
//you should close the connection when you are finished with it
mysql_close($conn);
?>
</div>
</body>
</html>
```

GENERATE AN ONLINE POLL USING PHP AND MYSQL

THE EXPERT: RACHEL ANDREW

Rachel is a director of Web development company edgeofmyseat.com (**www.edgeofmyseat.com**), and is currently a member of the Web Standards Project (**www.webstandards.org**). With years of Webmaster experience, she has co-written a number of books for Glasshaus (**www.glasshaus.com**) on Web development, the most recent of which was *Dreamweaver MX Design Projects*.

THE BRIEF

TUTORIAL OBJECTIVE
Create database tables, display your poll and record votes made

SKILL LEVEL

TIME REQUIRED
Two hours

ON THE DISC
Developer/ Tutorial files: poll.php

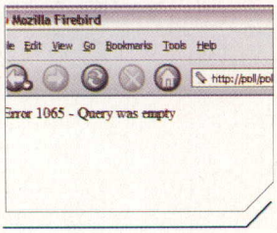
CODING TIP

DATABASE ERROR HANDLING

In CD code there are some additional lines providing error handling. For example the following is the code that inserts a vote into the table, in which we have misspelled the query '$sql'.

```
if ($_POST['answerID'] != "") {
        //insert results
        $sql = "INSERT INTO
tblResponse (questionID,answerID)
VALUES (" . $_POST['questionID'] .
"," . $_POST['answerID'] . ")";
        if
(!(mysql_query($sq, $conn)))
        displayError();
}
```

The returned error is 'Query was empty'. We know we've created a query named '$sql' so we can look again at the section and find the query is empty because we're trying to use $sq – which doesn't exist!



CREATE AN ONLINE POLL USING PHP AND MYSQL

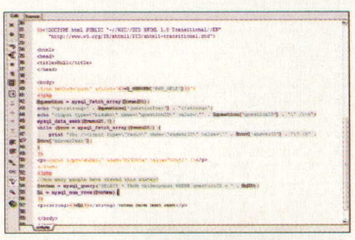
In the first of a three-part series, learn how to display a poll on your Web site and allow users to vote in it

In this tutorial we will be creating an online poll script. As this is a three-part tutorial, in the first part we will be creating the database tables within MySQL and inserting some sample data directly into the database so that we can test the display of our poll on a Web page. Then we will create the Web page that displays the poll and allows visitors to your site to insert their vote. In the next two tutorials we'll discover how to create new polls dynamically in an administration area and then how to display the poll results to your visitors using simple graphs.

To follow this tutorial you will need to have PHP, MySQL and a Web server such as Apache installed and running on your computer. The code in the tutorial should work whether you are developing with the server installed on a Mac, PC with Windows or on Linux, and all of the code is available on the cover CD.

Online polls add interactivity to your Web site. You could use a poll to ask your visitors a question about the site – such as whether they like your new design or functionality. Many sites that contain articles use online polls as a way to get a response from the visitors on their thoughts on the subject matter in the article.

Polls are often used as a rating system. Many Web design tutorial sites use polls in order that visitors can rate the usefulness of the article. A small poll, such as the type we are going to create, can be easily added to almost any page and gives the user a reason to come back, as they can see the results that have built up.



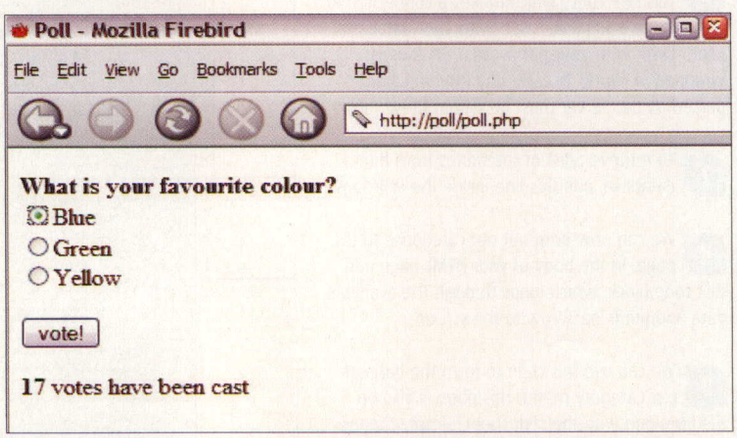
Head into your PHP editor, and you can start to piece together your poll from the SQL data

```
C:\WINDOWS\System32\cmd.exe - mysql -u=root -p

mysql> CREATE DATABASE dbPoll
    -> ;
Query OK, 1 row affected (0.05 sec)

mysql> USE dbPoll;
Database changed
mysql> CREATE TABLE tblQuestions (
    -> questionID INT NOT NULL AUTO_INCREMENT PRIMARY KEY,
    -> questionText VARCHAR(255));
Query OK, 0 rows affected (0.02 sec)

mysql> CREATE TABLE tblAnswers (
    -> answerID INT NOT NULL AUTO_INCREMENT PRIMARY KEY,
    -> questionID INT,
    -> answerText VARCHAR(255));
Query OK, 0 rows affected (0.00 sec)

mysql> CREATE TABLE tblResponse (
    -> responseID INT NOT NULL AUTO_INCREMENT PRIMARY KEY,
    -> questionID INT,
    -> answerID INT);
Query OK, 0 rows affected (0.01 sec)

mysql>
```

Create the database elements within the trusty confines of the MySQL command line

In this tutorial we start in MySQL. We've given the Create Table syntax as if you were creating the tables at the command line. However, you could just as easily be using a MySQL GUI such as the MySQL Control Center, downloadable from the MySQL Web site (www.mysql.com). Once we've created our tables as described in the code, we'll be creating a single page named 'poll.php'. On this page we'll pull the data from the database to create a poll, which is a form with each possible answer to the questions having a radio button that the user can select to indicate their answer. After making a selection the user hits the 'Vote!' button, their answer is logged in the database table 'tblResponses' and the page reloads. In order for you to see the results being logged into the database, in this tutorial we'll display the number of responses to the poll on the page.

Our poll could be used on any page of your site (although it would need to be a PHP page) and you are not limited in the number of possible choices for the questions or number of created polls. ■



After a small amount of work, we have a working poll which allows people to vote online

THE CODE

DESCRIPTION

Our code this time out takes in both MySQL and PHP, languages that require two different programming environments.

1 First create a database named 'dbPoll' and create a table named 'tblQuestions' with the fields 'questionID', 'questionText'.

2 Create a table named 'tblAnswers'. These are the possible answers for the poll question. This table has the fields answerID, questionID and answerText. The field questionID will contain the questionID from tblQuestions that links the answers to the correct question.

3 Create a table, 'tblResponse', to store the responses to the poll. This table contains the fields responseID, questionID, answerID.

4 Insert a question into tblQuestions then insert three rows into tblAnswers; the value inserted into questionID is created by inserting the question into tblQuestions.

5 Save a page into your site as 'polls.php'. On this page, connect to your database, replace USER with your MySQL username and PWD with your password. Select dbPoll.

6 Set a variable that tells the script which poll we are using. This variable is the value of questionID for the question you wish to use.

7 This part of the script inserts the results when the user votes. If something is in the form post for answerID, it does an insert.

8 Use SQL to retrieve the results from the database. We want to get the question with the questionID of 1 (the variable we set) as well as all answers that have a questionID of 1.

9 In the form we write the question first then loop through the answers, writing them out with a radio button with the name answerID and a value the same as the answer. The form posts back to this same page. If someone has selected a radio button, there'll be something in answerID.

10 This part gives you an indication of how people have voted. If you open the page and vote you should see this number increase by one.

```
mysql> CREATE DATABASE dbPoll;

mysql> CREATE TABLE tblQuestions (
questionID INT NOT NULL AUTO_INCREMENT PRIMARY KEY,
questionText VARCHAR(255));
```

```
mysql> CREATE TABLE tblAnswers (
answerID INT NOT NULL AUTO_INCREMENT PRIMARY KEY,
questionID INT,
answerText VARCHAR(255));
```

```
mysql> CREATE TABLE tblResponse (
responseID INT NOT NULL AUTO_INCREMENT PRIMARY KEY,
questionID INT,
answerID INT);
```

```
mysql> INSERT INTO tblQuestions (questionText) VALUES ('What is your favourite colour?');

mysql> INSERT INTO tblAnswers (questionID, answerText) VALUES (1, 'Blue');

mysql> INSERT INTO tblAnswers (questionID, answerText) VALUES (1, 'Green');

mysql> INSERT INTO tblAnswers (questionID, answerText) VALUES (1, 'Yellow');
```

```
<?php
//connect to the database
$conn = mysql_connect("localhost","USER","PWD");
//choose the poll db
mysql_select_db("dbPoll", $conn);
```

```
//set a variable to say which poll we are loading
$qID = 1;
```

```
//if the form has been posted then insert the results into the database
if ($_POST['answerID'] != "") {
        //insert results
        $sql = "INSERT INTO tblResponse (questionID,answerID) VALUES (" . $_POST['questionID'] .
",". $_POST['answerID'] . ")";
        mysql_query($sql, $conn);
}
```

```
//query the database for a list of categories
$result = mysql_query("SELECT * FROM tblQuestions, tblAnswers WHERE tblQuestions.questionID =
tblAnswers.questionID AND tblQuestions.questionID = " . $qID, $conn);
```

```
?><!DOCTYPE html PUBLIC "-//W3C//DTD XHTML 1.0 Transitional//EN"
        "http://www.w3.org/TR/xhtml1/DTD/xhtml1-transitional.dtd">

<html>
<head>
<title>Poll</title>
</head>

<body>
<form method="post" action="<?=$_SERVER['PHP_SELF']?>">
<?php
$question = mysql_fetch_array($result);
echo "<p><strong>" . $question['questionText'] . "</strong>";
echo "<input type=\"hidden\" name=\"questionID\" value=\"" . $question['questionID'] . "\" />\n";
mysql_data_seek($result,0);
while ($row = mysql_fetch_array($result)) {
        print "<br /><input type=\"radio\" name=\"answerID\" value=\"" . $row['answerID'] . "\"
/>" . $row['answerText'];
}
?>
<p><input type="submit" name="btnVote" value="vote!" /></p>
</form>
```

```
<?php
//how many people have viewed this survey?
$votes = mysql_query("SELECT * FROM tblResponse WHERE questionID = " . $qID);
$i = mysql_num_rows($votes);
?>
<p><strong><?=$i?></strong> votes have been cast</p>

</body>
</html>
```

TUTORIAL: DEVELOPER
PUBLISH NEWS AND SYNDICATE YOUR CONTENT WITH RSS FEED

THE EXPERT: PHILIP BENNISON

Philip has been working in new media for nearly a decade, and has been writing coding tutorials for the past six years. Over his career, he's worked on everything from blue-chip corporate Web sites to small business eCommerce enterprises. When not coding, he says you can find him amusing himself by hitting people with swords and playing Scrabble.

THE BRIEF

TUTORIAL OBJECTIVE

Create an RSS feed using XML and publish it online

SKILL LEVEL

TIME REQUIRED

30 minutes

PUBLISH NEWS AND SYNDICATE YOUR CONTENT WITH RSS FEED

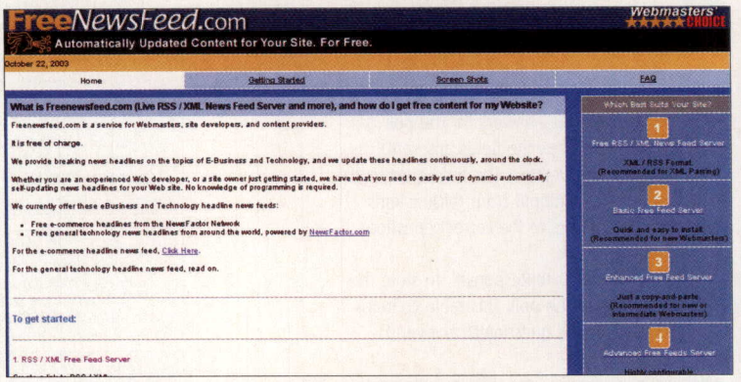
Want to know an easy way of distributing your content, publishing your latest news and generating traffic to your site? We show you how to create your own feed

The Internet is all about the exchange of information, and there's a multitude of ways in which to do this.

RSS is one of the easiest and most effective ways to syndicate your content, allowing you to create a 'news feed' that can be accessed by anyone and everyone who may be interested. It allows you to publish your content in bite-sized segments called 'items'. These usually include headlines, a description of the content and a link to the relevant page, but can also include any number of other elements such as an image logo or publication date. In recent years, it has become an extremely popular way of distributing content and is quickly becoming one of the hottest things in online communication.

So, how do you get a bite of this electronic pie? Well, creating your own RSS feed couldn't be simpler. There are a number of sites that enable you to produce an RSS feed easily, effectively and without having to worry yourself with coding or anything of that nature. However, it pays to be aware of at least some of the mechanics of producing an RSS feed – especially in the light of the relative simplicity involved in building one.

Creating an RSS feed means using XML. XML stands for eXtensible Markup Language, and is remarkably similar to HTML. The only difference is that XML tags are defined. In other words you could pretty much make up any tag in XML, so long as you use it in the right way. On the other hand, the RSS standard defines a number of tags that must be used when creating a feed, so that anything or anyone accessing your RSS feed will know what the various tags mean.

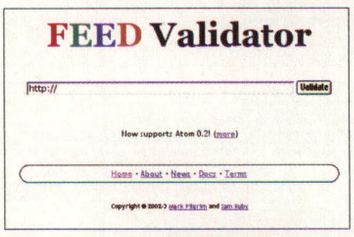


You can pick up a free news feed for your site at the appropriately named **www.freenewsfeed.com**

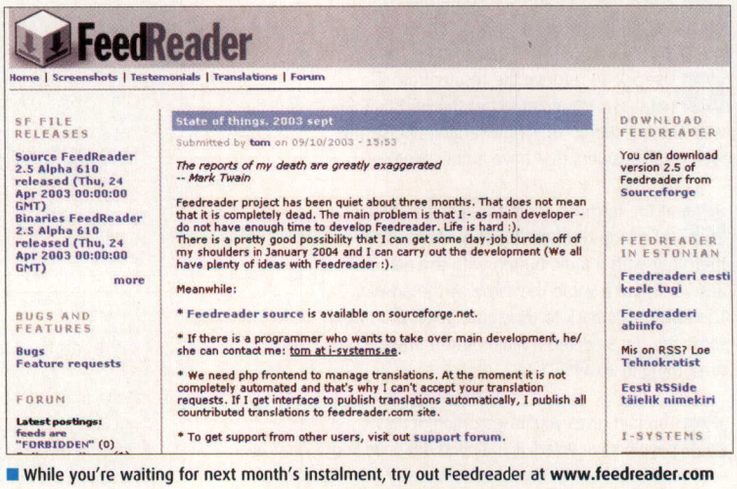
But what do you do after you've created your RSS feed, and how do you access other people's feed? Because RSS feeds are written in XML, you can't just display them on your site in their raw format. You'll need to find a way of parsing the information so you can display it the way you want it to be displayed.

This can be done in a number of ways, and we'll show you how to write a code to handle this in next month's tutorial. In the meantime, you can use one of the many pre-prepared parsers available over the Net, eg Feed Reader (**www.feedreader.com**).

Do you want to put someone else's RSS feed on your pages? If their site includes RSS feed, it should also have a page containing information about the RSS feed, including details on copyright. In fact, if you're using RSS, you should be sure to include a page of your own. ■



The validator at **feeds.archive.org/validator/** isn't the prettiest page around, but it does a job



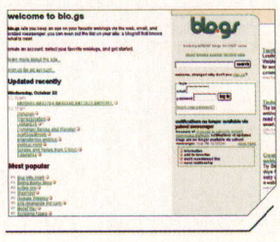
While you're waiting for next month's instalment, try out Feedreader at **www.feedreader.com**

CODING TIP

GETTING THE WORD OUT

Once you've created your RSS feed, it's important to let everyone know that it's available. You can do this by submitting the feed on RSS directories and search engines. These can be found listed at **www.isedb.com/html/Web_Directories/Specialty_Directories/Internet_Directories/RSS_Directories/**, and you should try and submit your feed to as many of these as possible.

If you update your feed at any time, it's important to 'ping' one of the services that keep track of when RSS feeds change. This makes sure that other sites will find out about the changes and know to check your feed for any changes you might have made. Sites like Weblogs.com (**www.weblogs.com**) and blo.gs (**blo.gs**) are good sites to do this on.



PUBLISH NEWS AND SYNDICATE YOUR CONTENT WITH RSS FEED

THE CODE

DESCRIPTION

Get ready to dirty your hands with some XML. Our walkthrough shows how to use this language with RSS for best results.

1 Open up Notepad and copy over the code. The first part of this code declares that the file you're creating is an XML file and specifies the version it is using. It then goes ahead and does exactly the same thing with the RSS, specifying the version. There are a number of versions but RSS 2.0 tends to be more widely used than most. Finally, we open the **<channel>** tag, in which we will place all the information we need to create the feed channel.

2 The next part of our code defines the channel. It needs to have a title, a description and a link (usually to the home page on your site). These are enclosed in the **<title>**, **<description>**, and **<link>** tags respectively.

3 Now we create our first item using the **<item>** tags. We then use the **<title>**, **<description>**, and **<link>** tags again to define the content of this item. You can repeat this as many times as you wish for each item in your channel.

4 The next item shows you a few of the more advanced features you can incorporate into your RSS feed. This includes a language tag, copyright tag, managingEditor tag and a webMaster tag. These all specify additional details about the channel. There's even an image element, specifying a logo which can be displayed when the channel is accessed. The image tag is similar to the item tags in the fact that it encloses other tags, each specifying another piece of information concerning the image.
Once you've finished typing in all of the above, save the file as 'feed.xml' (or whatever else takes your fancy, so long as it ends in .xml). Now upload it to the root directory of your Web site.

5 Before we can be sure your RSS feed is actually going to work, its important to validate it, to make sure it's working properly. Go to the RSS Validator (**feeds.archive.org/validator/**). Simply enter the address of the RSS file on your Web site (ie **www.yoursite.com/feed.xml**) and click Validate. You'll be told if there's anything you need to fix or if the RSS feed is okay.

```
<?xml version="1.0"?>
<rss version='2.0'>
<channel>

<title>Latest News and Developments at MyCompany.net</title>
<description>Find out all the latest news and developments at MyCompany.net,
and keep up to date on our latest product ranges</description>
<link>http://mycompany.net/</link>

<item>
<title>200 new vacancies in our latest recruitment drive</title>
<description>MyCompany.net is expanding after it's success on both sides of the
channel, and because of this we've decided to take on more staff. It's estimated that
this latest recruitment drive will create 200 new positions at all levels within the
company.</description>
<link>http://mycompany.net/news/20031007.html</link>
</item>

<item>
<title>New CEO is set to put MyCompany.net on the map</title>
<description>The new CEO at MyCompany.net has big plans for the company; quality
products, lower prices, and a level of service unparalleled in our industry. John
Smith's track record to date has been awe inspiring, and we're looking forward to
good things in the future.<description>
<link>http://mycompany.net/news/20030930.html</link>
</item>

<language>en-uk</language>
<copyright>Copyright 1996-2003 MyCompany.net</copyright>
<managingEditor>editor@mycompany.net (John Smith)</managingEditor>
<webMaster>webmaster@mycompany.net (John Smith)</webMaster>

<image>
<url>http://mycompany.net/ logo.gif</url>
<title>MyCompany.net logo</title>
<link>http://mycompany.net/</link>
<width>100</width>
<height>80</height>
</image>

<channel>
</rss>
```

UPLOAD FILES IN ASP USING THE ASPUPLOAD COMPONENT

THE EXPERT: RACHEL ANDREW

Rachel is a director of Web development company edgeofmyseat.com (**www.edgeofmyseat.com**), and is currently a member of the Web Standards Project (**www.webstandards.org**). With years of Webmaster experience, she has co-written a number of books for Glasshaus (**www.glasshaus.com**) on Web development, the most recent of which was *Dreamweaver MX Design Projects*.

THE BRIEF

TUTORIAL OBJECTIVE
Upload a file to a Web server using a web-based form

SKILL LEVEL

TIME REQUIRED
One hour

ON THE DISC
Developer/ Tutorial files:
global.css
upload.asp
upload2.asp

CODING TIP

ACCESSING OTHER FORM FIELDS

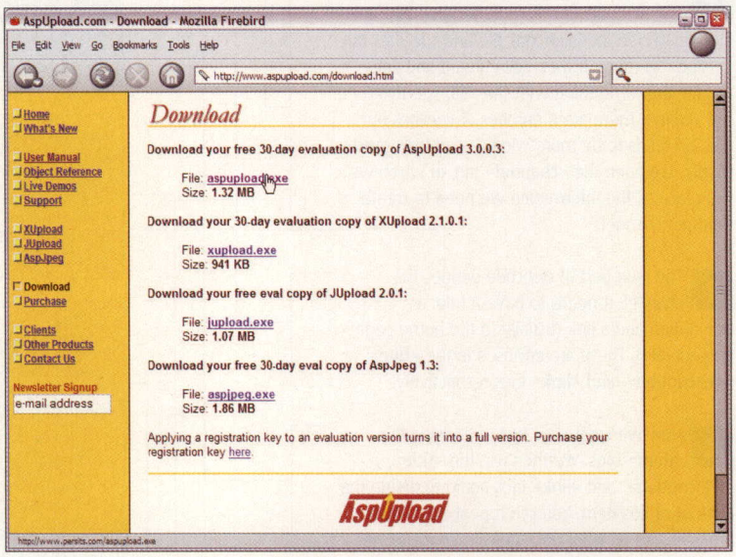
Because you have set your form to multipart/form-data you cannot access other form fields using Request.Form or Request.QueryString. If you wanted to add some additional fields to this form, for instance to collect the user's name and email address, after submitting the form you would need to use Upload.Form to get the data from those fields. For example if you had a form field named 'firstName' in a regular for post, you would use Request.Form("firstName") to address it; when using AspUpload you must use Upload.Form("firstName"). These methods are only available after you have saved the file using Upload.SaveVirtual or Upload.Save.

Learn to use AspUpload, which is installed on much shared Windows Web hosting, to upload files to your Web site

You may have seen Web sites that allow the user to upload a file to the server by way of a form that lets you browse for a file on your hard drive then upload it. In this tutorial we'll learn how to do this using a component that's commonly installed on shared hosting servers. (You'll need to have ASP running on the Windows platform.)

Your first step is to check that your hosting company has the component installed, if you're intending to implement this on your site. Do this by emailing the host and asking whether they have AspUpload installed, or look on the hosting company's Web site – most companies will have a list of the components available for use. If you try this script on a server that doesn't have the component installed, you will simply get an error when you attempt to create an instance of it.

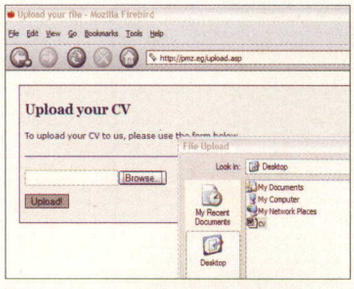
Next, you can download a 30-day trial of AspUpload if you want to be able to test this on your local computer (with IIS installed). Visit the site **www.aspupload.com**, click the download link and you can then download the trial. You'll download an executable file which you can run, and it will install the component on your system. During the installation process it will need to stop and restart IIS. Bookmark the AspUpload Web site, as there's plenty of useful documentation there as to how you can use the component and integrate it with other parts of your application.



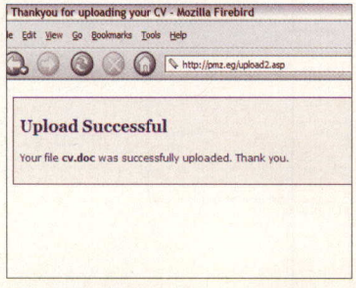
■ The free 30-day trial of AspUpload should be all you need to create your upload links

Once you have AspUpload installed on your computer you'll be able to follow this tutorial. The example here demonstrates how users can upload a file from their hard drive to your server. If you were to implement this as is, you would need to FTP into your server to download the uploaded files. However, it's only a small step to integrate this with the rest of your applications – perhaps to store the details of the uploaded file along with user details already stored in the database, or allow administrators to download the uploaded files from a Web page. You could also use this as part of a script that emails the uploaded file as an attachment to someone, by using CDONTS or another mail component that allows you to send email attachments.

Using components such as AspUpload is a way of increasing the functionality of your site very simply. Other components you may well have access to are things like ASPJpeg – also by the same company that manufacture AspUpload. ASPJpeg allows you to resize and otherwise manipulate images that are uploaded to your site. Components all work in a similar way: you create an instance of the object and then use its methods to perform tasks. You can write and install your own components or use a whole range of free ones. However, shared hosting will not normally install third-party components because of the resources they consume. ■



■ The user experience is simple but effective – they click the link to upload



■ Giving feedback on the upload process is vital to let visitors know if it was successful

UPLOAD FILES IN ASP USING THE ASPUPLOAD COMPONENT

THE CODE

DESCRIPTION

With a little help from the AspUpload component, we're going to create a script that lets people upload to our site. Here goes...

1 The initial upload page contains a form; the form consists of an input field with the type of 'file' and a Submit button. Input Type File renders a box with a Browse button that allows the user to locate a file on their hard drive. The form needs to have the attribute enctype set to 'multipart/form-data' to allow the upload.

```
<!DOCTYPE html PUBLIC "-//W3C//DTD XHTML 1.0 Transitional//EN"
      "http://www.w3.org/TR/xhtml1/DTD/xhtml1-transitional.dtd">

<html>
<head>
<title>Upload your file</title>
<link rel="stylesheet" type="text/css" href="global.css" />
</head>

<body>
<div id="content">
<h1>Upload your CV</h1>
<p>To upload your CV to us, please use the form below.</p>
<hr />
<form method="post" enctype="multipart/form-data" action="upload2.asp">
<p><input type="file" name="file1"></p>
<p><input type="submit" value="Upload!" class="submit"> </p>
</form>
</div>

</body>
</html>
```

2 We begin the upload script by declaring the scripting language and setting the **Option Explicit** flag, which means we have to declare the variables. On the next line we declare all variables using **Dim**.

```
<%@LANGUAGE="VBSCRIPT"%>
<%Option Explicit%>
<%
Dim Upload, uploadArray, fileName, newFileName, fso
```

3 We first need to create an instance of the **AspUpload** object so that we can use it to upload the file.

```
'Set ASPUpload
Set Upload = Server.CreateObject("Persits.Upload.1")
```

4 We use **Upload.SaveVirtual** to grab the file and save it to the directory we specify – in this case **/uploads**.

```
Upload.SaveVirtual("/uploads")
```

5 It's now a good idea to rename the file so you don't get any duplication. One way to easily do this is to tag the date and time onto the beginning of the file. We do this by getting the date using the ASP function **Now()**. We also remove any strange characters and spaces from the filename. We then use the **FileSystem** object to rename the file.

```
'get real filename from end of path
uploadArray = split((Upload.Files(1).Path),"\")
fileName = uploadArray(ubound(uploadArray))

'make a new filename
newFileName = Now() & fileName
newFileName = Replace(newFileName, " ", "_")
newFileName = Replace(newFileName, "/", "")
newFileName = Replace(newFileName, "\", "")
newFileName = Replace(newFileName, ":", "")
'rename file
Set fso = CreateObject("Scripting.FileSystemObject")
fso.MoveFile Server.MapPath("/uploads/" & fileName), Server.MapPath("/uploads/" & newFileName)
```

6 Close the **fso** and **Upload** objects now that we have finished using them.

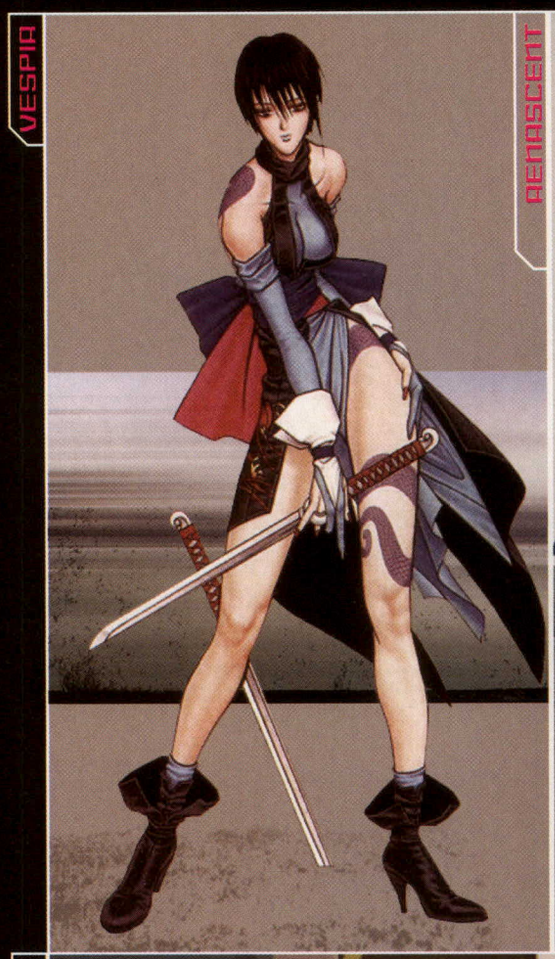
```
set fso = nothing
set Upload = nothing
%>
```

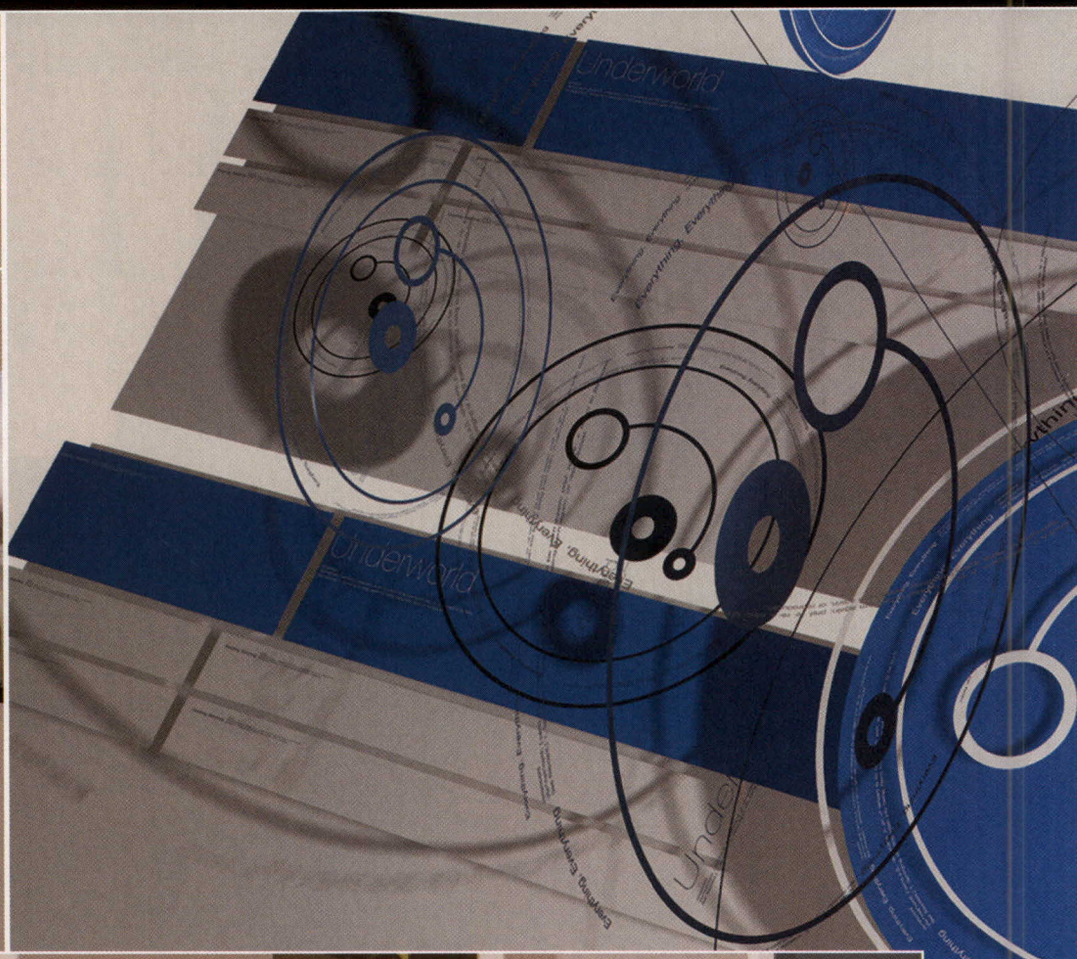
7 Finally, display a Thank You page so your user knows the upload has been successful. Show the name of the file they uploaded, so they can feel confident that you have got what they expect you to have. Display the actual filename and now the new filename that you created. If you're using a database on your Web site you could take this example a step further. After doing the upload, insert a line of data into the database which gives the file location, and then display a list of files in your admin area that have been uploaded, and download them from there. Also check out the tutorials and help on **www.aspupload.com** for more ideas of how to use this object.

```
<!DOCTYPE html PUBLIC "-//W3C//DTD XHTML 1.0 Transitional//EN"
      "http://www.w3.org/TR/xhtml1/DTD/xhtml1-transitional.dtd">

<html>
<head>
<title>Thankyou for uploading your CV</title>
<link rel="stylesheet" type="text/css" href="global.css" />
</head>

<body>
<div id="content">
<h1>Upload Successful</h1>

<p>Your file <strong><%=fileName%></strong> was successfully uploaded. Thank you.</p>

</div>
</body>
</html>
```

THE BEST IN WEB DESIGN

Gallery





GALLERY

SUBMISSIONS

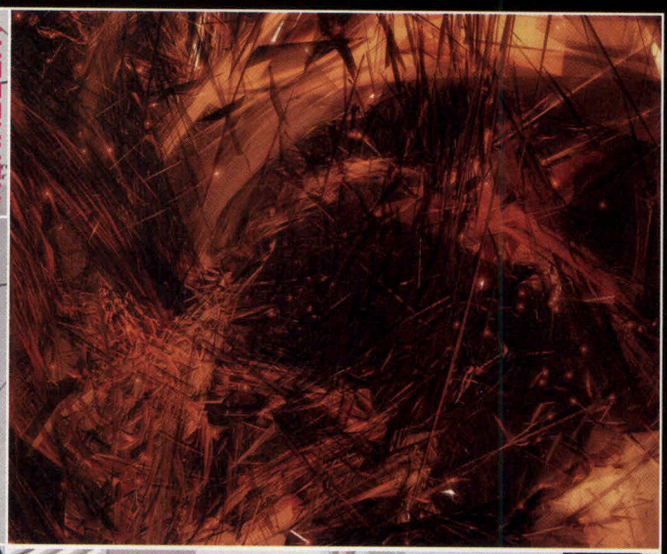
SEND YOUR SITES TO US

Have you got a site or a piece of artwork you've created that you'd like to see featured on these pages? If you're reading this thinking that you've done better, please drop us a line and we'll showcase your work to our like-minded readers. It doesn't matter if you're a Flash guru or a Photoshop master – as long as you've created something cool and visually appealing, then we'll cover your work in here. Who knows what it could lead to?

CONTACT:

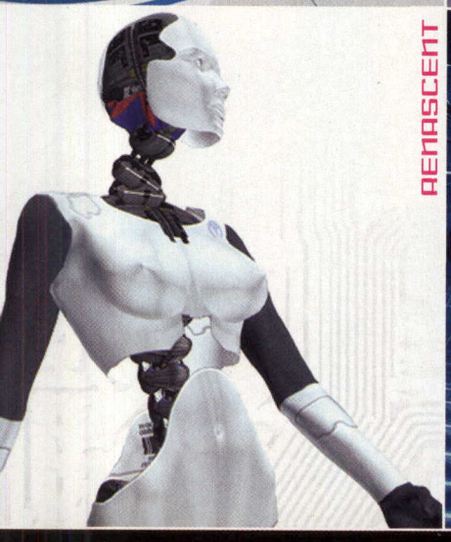
Practical Internet Web Designer
Highbury- Paragon,
Paragon House,
St Peters Road,
Bournemouth, BH1 2JS

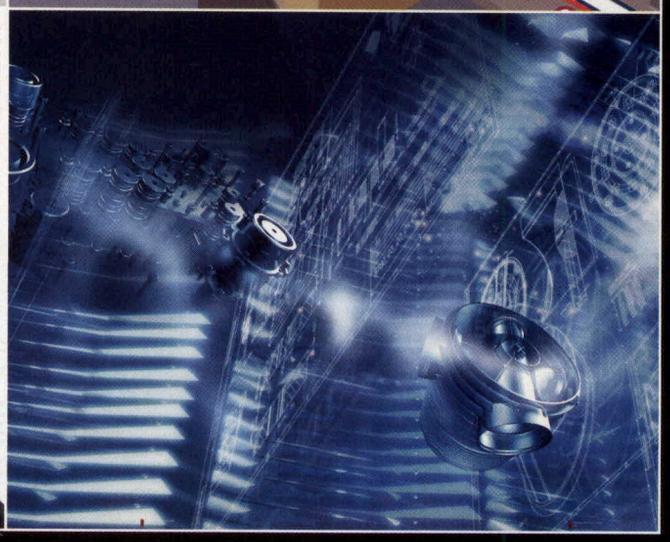
Email: webdesigner@paragon.co.uk



Name: **Practice Design Homepage**
URL: **www.practicedesign.co.uk**
Designed by: **Practice Design Consultants**
A dynamic office block cleverly illustrates the domain of this talented design firm. The bright splash screen suggests a graphic style aping the chunky sprites of retro videogames, which continues throughout. Although access is granted to numerous rooms and levels including a reception area and toilet, it's the computer office where everything happens. Here you'll navigate a quirky animated desk space to locate information about the team and view previous works for clients such as Macromedia and Adobe. Ditty audio and cute effects maintain the old-school digital vibe, while the quaint use of 2D visual effects remains charmingly refreshing.

Name: **Vespir**
URL: **www.vespir.com**
Designed by: **James H Forbes III**
Taking in both high-concept 3D models and cool illustrations, James Forbes' Vespir site shows well the skills that led him to a Digital Design degree. James boasts of proficiency in a wide variety of design packages, and you can see the marriage of Poser Pro and Photoshop working harmoniously in his robotic image below. According to his online CV, James is currently looking for design work, a situation that we can't really see staying in place for too long.



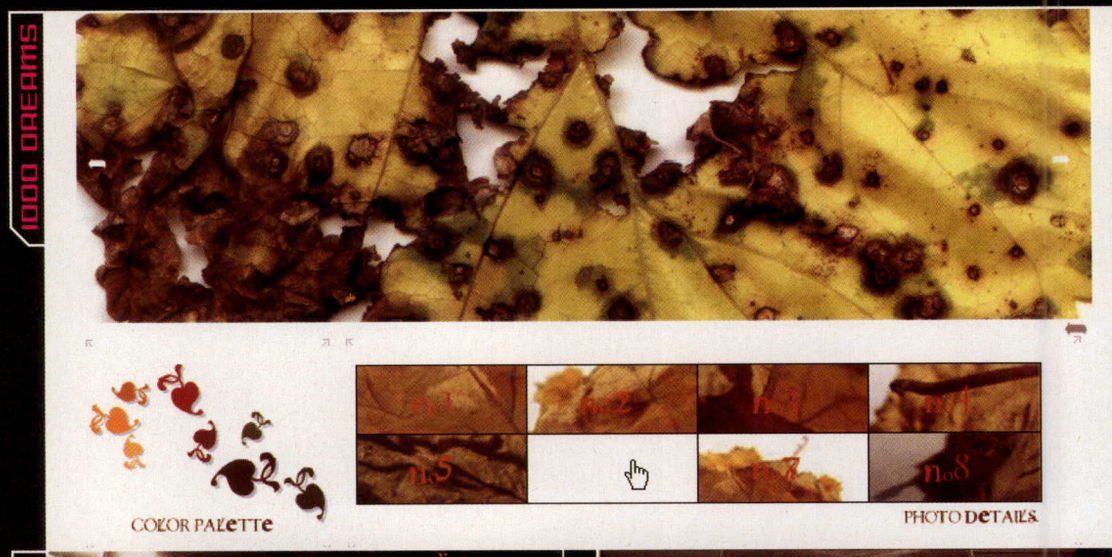


Name: **Renascent**
URL: **www.renascent.nl**
Designed by: **Joost Korngold**
Home to Dutch digital artist Joost Korngold, this contains a wealth of dazzling and enticing images, all built within the confines of Adobe Photoshop. Like many of his counterparts, Joost combines a love of stunning static images with digital video, and cites a passion for Premiere and Sorenson Squeeze among his many talents. Korngold has previously worked on projects for such luminaries as Nike, L'oreal, Philips and Hewlett Packard, and has been involved in Web design for clients around the world. You can catch more of Korngold's work in Friends of Ed and *After Effects Most Wanted* books.

THE BEST IN WEB DESIGN

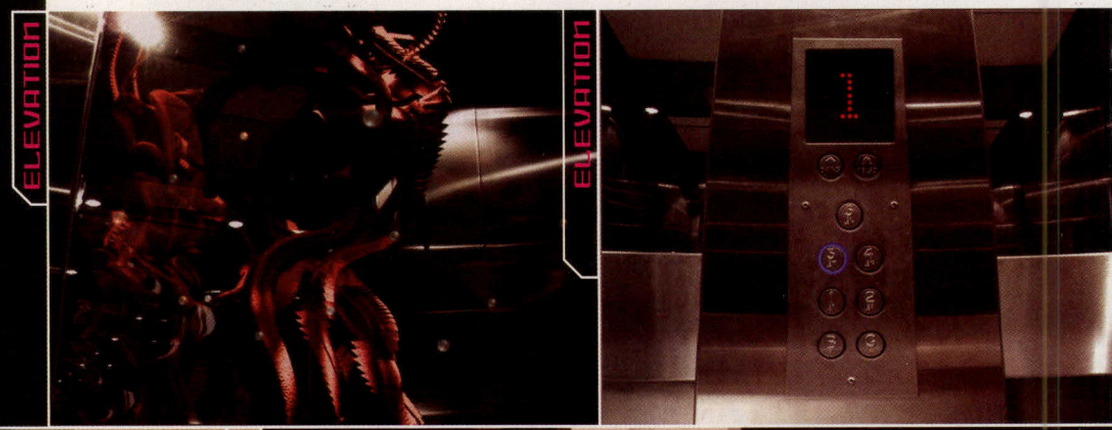
Name: Design Chapel Homepage
URL: www.designchapel.com
Designed by: Design Chapel

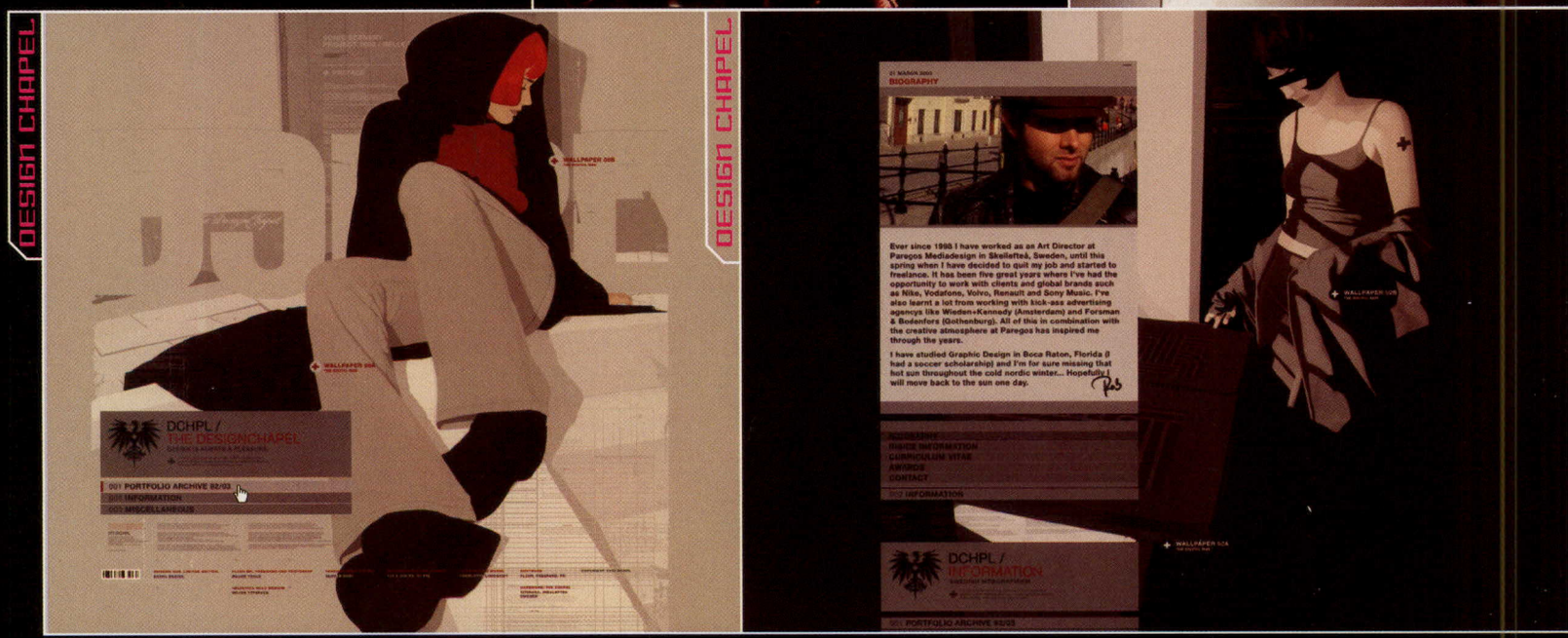
Sites such as this one for a freelance design house truly describe the mastery behind great design. You can't help but marvel at the creative vision and development effort that goes into producing this kind of content. It's easy to see why clients including Nike and Vodafone have all called upon services that include logo design and marketing. Thankfully the breathtaking results are on display, along with lush photos and striking illustrations. Every page features synonymous sketches of laid-back models posing perfectly against the jazzy grooves piped behind. What's more, the labelled sections for biographies and portfolios are provided with effortless dynamic menus.



Name: Elevation
URL: www.thethirdplace.com/espace/module5
Designed by: Soulbath

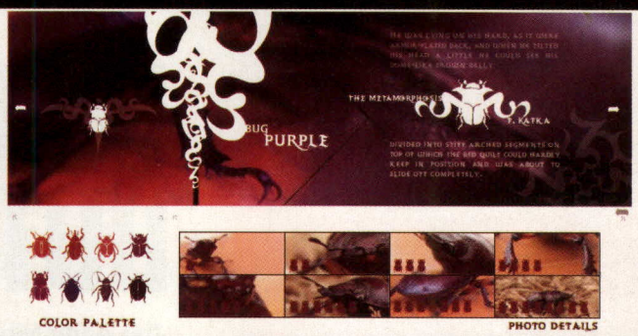
Elevation is one of a number of short films of Flash animations found on Sony's Playstation 2 'Third Place' site. Produced by a division of Hi-Res! UK, the loose narrative plays on the fears and paranoia of being trapped within a lift. Albeit odd, the innovative use of digital video, user interaction and poignant text is disturbingly effective. Numerous cinematic techniques like film noir-esque reflections and camera flickers are also incorporated, woven skilfully alongside a brooding soundtrack. If you like what you see, try visiting the main pages for similar creations by other artists and directors.



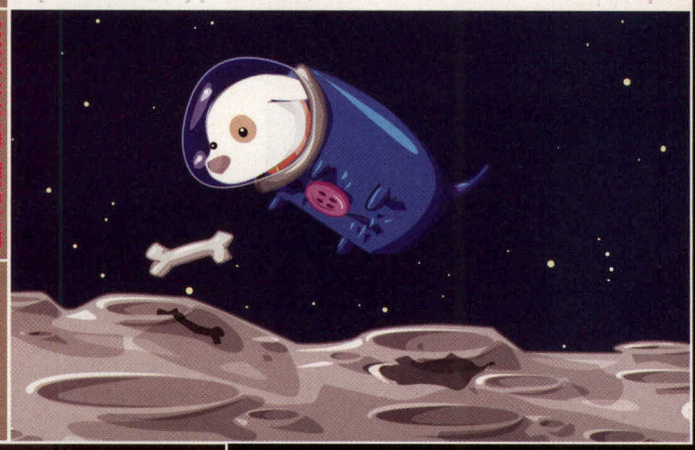


DESIGN CHAPEL

1000 DREAMS



DAVID LANHAM



DAVID LANHAM

Name: 1000 Dreams
URL: www.1000dreams.com
Designed by: Luis Escorial
Graphic designer Luis Escorial presents a photographic montage that celebrates the beauty in details. High resolution, pin sharp close-ups reveal the minute textures of beetles, fallen leaves and industrial hardware. Each is rounded up and introduced with ornate Flash animations, and the interactive colour palettes are a nice touch. The timid use of background colour and airy approach to the design only highlight the images, while even the preloading animations impress.

Name: David Lanham
URL: www.dlanham.com
Designed by: David Lanham
David Lanham's brand of cute illustrations and icons has seen him gain something of a following on the Web in recent times. Hailing from the beautifully named Orange Park in Florida, Lanham has a BA in Graphic Design, and now works as a freelance designer and illustrator. As well as illustrator work that we'd all be proud of, Lanham's site contains a selection of hand-drawn sketches that give you a nice insight into his working methods. He says that his images come from 'observing the world around him and putting a twist into it with his vivid imagination'.

eCOMMERCE

eCOMMERCE

Profitting on the Web

Making cash from your Web site is a common goal throughout the wired world. From multinational conglomorates through to one man band craft-makers, the ideal is the same: converting visitors into buyers.

The eCommerce section in *Practical Internet Web Designer* is designed specifically for people aiming to turn clicks into pounds (or dollars, or yen). This means that every month, we provide essential information for the decision-makers who shape their businesses' future.

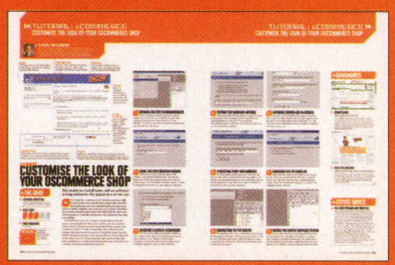
eBusiness is much more than selling your wares online, though, which is why we also strive to include tips and tricks for anyone who is keen to get their business or design portfolio online.

IN THIS ISSUE'S eCOMMERCE SECTION

Learn from the dotcom disasters....98
Give yourself a better chance of online success by learning from the high-profile failures of the dotcom boom and bust era

Build an eCommerce site 102
Create a fully-functioning online store in the second part of our osCommerce tutorial

Web hosting deals 108
Pick yourself the perfect Web hosting deal with our comprehensive listings section



Get yourself on the eCommerce bandwagon with our comprehensive guide to osCommerce

CONTACT US:

Do you have a topic you'd like to see covered in eCommerce? Get in touch at:

Practical Internet Web Designer
Highbury - Paragon,
Paragon House,
St Peter' s Road,
Bournemouth, BH1 2JS

Email: webdesigner@paragon.co.uk

LEARN FROM THE DOTCOM DISASTERS

The early Nineties left a string of online failures in its wake. Danny McAleer talks you through some of the worst, and points out the lessons we can learn

Markets are fickle at the best of times, and history is littered with documented collapses in stock exchanges, from the South Seas investors of the Eighteenth century, right up to the late Eighties with the over-investment in technology companies. The trend has always been to exploit market segments before they consolidated, and rarely can this type of growth be sustained.

The collapse of the dotcom bubble a few years ago was something extraordinary. Firstly, because it all came and went so quickly, secondly because of the vast quantities of money that were gambled and lost, and lastly because many of the companies embroiled in the debacle had seemingly divorced themselves from the fundamental principles of business practice.

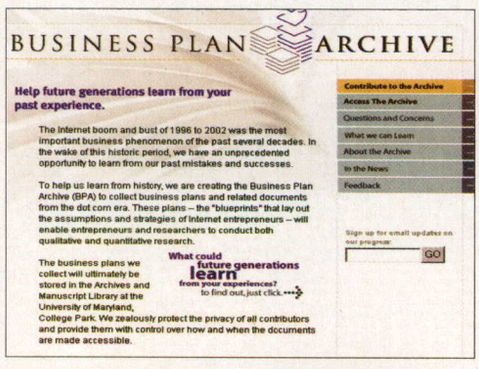
It was destined to go pear-shaped. And sure enough, as early as 2000 the casualties began wheeling into the liquidation clinic for some serious treatment. Webmergers' (a company set up to track mergers, acquisitions, bankruptcies and shutdowns of substantial Internet companies around the world) research suggests that more than 4,800 Internet companies have either been acquired or closed since the height of the dotcom investment boom early in 2000. During this same three-year period, at least 962 substantial Internet companies shut down or declared bankruptcy: 283 in 2000, 501 in 2001 and 170 in 2002. But just eight so far this year. However, its best estimate says that at the beginning of this decade there were between 7,000 and 10,000 Web-based companies that had received formal funding.

Most of the largest dotcom failures happened in the US, where at the time access to the Net was far more widespread and vastly cheaper than it was in the UK and Europe. That was until 1998, when the US online market matured, and there was no room among the Amazon.coms and the like for new business growth. Then the venture capitalist sharks swum across the pond, hungry for new business to sink their teeth into. Less than a couple of years later, free ISPs appeared here and the number of UK folk using the Internet rose sharply. The online businesses had an influx of potential customers, and it was the turn of the European investors to be swept up in the irrational exuberance of it all...

Astronomical valuations

One reason the bubble inflated in the first place was that as these dotcom companies had begun to emerge, the US economy had been in a growth period for quite some time. Established companies had consequently begun to issue warnings that future profits might not be quite so healthy, and so investors fluttered a few prospective quids in the direction of the online companies instead.

As the interest in these stocks and companies increased, with only a limited number of shares available, it was inevitable that the price and subsequent valuation of these companies would rise. It did – and quite monumentally, too. In the first few months of 1999 the overall dotcom sector increased two-fold in value. The initial public offering (IPO) enabled the promising dotcom business to raise substantial



A project set up by the Robert H Smith School of Business has been devised to record the dotcom era. Access to the info is free

The Department of Trade and Industry (**www.dti.gov.uk**) is full of guidance on setting up a business, including info on funding

THE BIGGEST DISASTERS

DOTCOMS

A BRIEF LOOK AT SOME OF THE LARGEST DOTCOM DISASTERS, AND HOW THEIR BLIND OPTIMISM, EXCESSES AND BAD PLANNING CONTRIBUTED TO FINANCIAL MELTDOWN...

PETS.COM
www.pets.com

Founded in 1998, Pets.com raised more than $80 million in its initial public offering, but less than two years later, the company that was backed by successful online traders Amazon.com (which had a 30 percent stake), closed its site to orders. Although it didn't file for bankruptcy, it sold off its assets and laid off more than two-thirds of its staff, including the sock puppet icon it used to promote the site. Sad. In its last year of trading, the company lost more than $20 million.

BOO.COM
www.boo.com

Reportedly burning through more than $100m of its backers' money in its brief lifetime, the online fashion and sportswear store set up by Ernst Malmsten, Kajsa Leander and an investment banker collapsed in May 2000, leaving 300 jobless. Just a year after its launch, its investors, which included J P Morgan and Bennetton, withdrew their support and refused to bail them out with an additional $30 million of lifeline funding. However, despite its high technology site, Boo's sales were not insubstantial, with nearly half a million pounds' worth in the months before it ceased trading.

KOZMO.COM
www.kozmo.com

Formed by a couple of investment bankers, Joseph Park and Yong Kang, in March 1998, Kozmo.com promised its customers free one-hour delivery of many different items, from coffee to movies. Driven by venture capital, its online convenience store idea raised around $280 (including $60 million from Amazon.com), but its business model was flawed. "This seemed like a dumb idea from the beginning," was the verdict of one financial analyst, Vern Keenan of Keenan Vision. Despite reporting profits for the first time a few months later in April 2001, Kozmo went kaput and laid off its 1,000 staff.

THEGLOBE
www.theglobe.com

Through six rounds of public and private financing, founders Stephan Paternot and Todd Krizelman raised nearly $200 million for their online community site. On paper at least these young college graduates had each amassed a personal fortune of around $75 million. Theglobe.com went public in November 1998 with an IPO of $9, which rose more than 900% the same day, before closing at 606%, or $63.50. At that point, this was the largest opening-day gain of any IPO in US history. However, when the advertising revenue dried up in 2000, Paternot stepped aside as the company's chief executive. Before the site shut down, the shares were worth just 14 cents. It left investors owed millions and Paternot somewhat distraught: "It suddenly dawned on me that I might get nothing out of this, not a penny."

VALUE AMERICA
www.valueamerica.com

One-time housewares salesman Craig Winn's Value America site had an initial IPO of $23, which ascended to a high of $74.23 in April 1999. His idea of building a department store for the Internet attracted high-profile investment, including from co-founder of Microsoft, Paul Allen, and FedEx chairman, Fred Smith. At its peak, the three-year-old company was valued at $2.4 billion despite never registering a single cent of profit. Sales went from $134,000 in 1997 to $42.3 million in 1998, but the losses rose just as fast, particularly in marketing deals and advertising. After losing $425,000 in its startup year of 1996, the company lost $2 million in 1997 and $64.8 million in 1998. Neither was there sufficient investment in the company's increasingly chaotic infrastructure, including the all-important Web site, which had become overburdened, outdated and slow. After many more debacles, and the share price falling below $2, Winn was fired from the company in 1999.

"SIMPLY MAKING A COMPANY PUBLIC AND FLOATING IT ON THE STOCK EXCHANGE ISN'T ALWAYS THE BEST WAY OF SECURING CAPITAL"

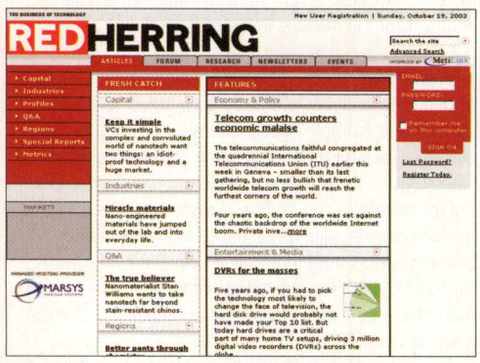
Amazon.com (**www.amazon.co.uk**) continuously invests its profits back into the company to expand its services and products, and has grown to become one of the world's most established online businesses

investment, even though it hadn't even made a profit. Its employees were paid in stock options, which made them instant millionaires, at least on paper.

Although it wasn't necessarily the fault of the dotcom companies themselves, simply making a company public and floating it on the stock exchange isn't always the best way of securing capital. New startups can be financed using one of three different methods, says Business Link (**www.businesslink.org**): equity you raise yourself or external equity from venture capital and selling shares; debt such as a bank loan or overdraft based on the assets of your company; grants that are available to certain types of businesses and in certain areas of the country.

The UK Government has a couple of solutions of its own. The Small Firms Loan Guarantee Scheme works by encouraging banks and other financial institutions to lend money to entrepreneurs who lack the security necessary for a loan. Instead, the Government provides the guarantee. "It's one of the most successful small-business schemes, having guaranteed over 82,000 loans valued at more than £3 billion," says Small Business Minister Nigel Griffiths. Another initiative is the Regional Venture Capital Funds scheme, which has been designed to encourage venture capital, albeit on a much smaller scale, back into Internet startups. Says Griffiths: "Many growing businesses want to access smaller amounts, which is why the Regional Venture Capital Funds will provide equity funding up to £500,000."

Nevertheless, Clement Chambers, CEO of ADVFN.com (a UK stocks and shares Web site) advocates being thrifty with your finances. "If you want to start an Internet business you need to be able to build and launch it on a shoestring. It needs to bring in money almost immediately, and your credit cards and your granny are going to be your best sources of finance."



An excellent digest of up-to-date technology business news can be found at **www.redherring.com**

Spending the investors' money

However your company gets its pot of money, it isn't wise to blow the whole lot in the first few months of operating. You'll need to have formulated a plan of how this money will be paid back to the investors, while turning the company into profit over a pre-determined period. Starting on a small scale – both in terms of expansion and the use of technology – will help enormously.

Stories circulated in the press of champagne-fuelled corporate events and other such extravagant expenditure during the dotcom boom. But strangely, at the time this seemed acceptable: the actual business model of a typical

THE RISE AND FALL AND RISE AGAIN OF LASTMINUTE.COM

LASTMINUTE

One dotcom that has a life akin to Reginald Perrin is the online travel broker Lastminute.com. Launched in 1998, the fledgling company soared to a valuation of £750 million in a matter of mere months. Such was the excitement surrounding this successful online venture that one of its co-founders, the feisty Martha Lane Fox, was never out of the print media, and even made appearances on television.

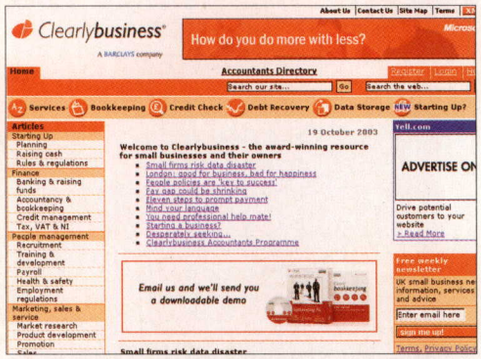
However, the flotation in 2000 caused problems on the stock market with massive over-subscriptions, and its share value soon dived below the £1 mark. In 1999, the company had 364,750 subscribers and gross sales of £2.6m, which increased to 4,208,484 and £124.2m respectively. However, the net revenue continued to fall, from its initial -£4.5m to a debt of £53.6m in 2001.

But, unlike the other dotcom failures, the company held on, developing innovative ideas for the travel business and investing in its infrastructure both in terms of technology and business avenues. It continues to expand through mergers and acquisitions, and now offers a broader range of services to its original holiday packages, including theatre and concert tickets.

In fact, Lastminute's last quarterly report reads well, with gross profits up to £15m from £6.1m in the second quarter. "Our model demonstrated its resilience in the last quarter, which was tough for the travel industry," explains chairman Allan Leighton. "Quarter three has started well, with a record order bank for Easter departures. We remain confident that we will meet our expectations of continued growth and overall group profitability."

An inspired idea: Lastminute offered Net users the chance to snap up holidays at a fraction of the price as long as they are prepared to up-sticks immediately

Webmergers tracks mergers, acquisitions, bankruptcies and shutdowns of substantial Internet companies around the world



For advice and info on setting up a business, including where to get funding, try Barclays' Clearly Business: **www.clearlybusiness.com**

that all this marketing spend may have generated, without sustainable customer base or any profitable revenue stream it all becomes a terrible exercise in economic futility. Relying on banner advertising is never going to provide the requisite income.

So, how should you spend your investors' money? Naturally, advertising is imperative, although the dotcoms did overdo this ever so slightly. Millions were spent on television advertising for these online businesses which could never be recouped from the revenue generated. Without the big budgets of the dotcom boom, online businesses are returning to low-cost marketing techniques such as email newsletters, viral marketing and, of course, word of mouth. Starting small and expanding when you have secured a market is also advised.

A Quarter Of is one such recent Internet startup. Avoiding the urge to spend other people's money, the site was funded personally by its founder Michael Parker. "To date, the most common way that people find out about A Quarter Of is through recommendations from friends," explains Parker. "In many ways we are the antithesis of the markets in the dotcom hype."

"THE BUSINESSES LEAST LIKELY TO SUCCEED ON THE WEB ARE THOSE THAT THINK THE RULES OF BUSINESS PRACTICE DON'T APPLY"

dotcom relied on losing money to build a sufficient market share, and to infiltrate the public consciousness. Known as the 'burn-rate', the haemorrhaging of millions of pounds in a matter of months was almost encouraged by investors. However, when the markets started wobbling, US investors in the dotcoms suddenly wanted to see profits, or at least a move towards profitability. When the share prices plummeted, these unprofitable companies soon had their spendy-tokens revoked.

Many Internet businesses' focus was ill-placed in technology, rather than in spending on customer values and needs. It's all very well having a glossy Web site, but if the orders never materialise, or worse, your customers cannot even order from you, it becomes impossible to sustain the costs of hardware and technical expertise needed to keep it running. And so in spite of the interest

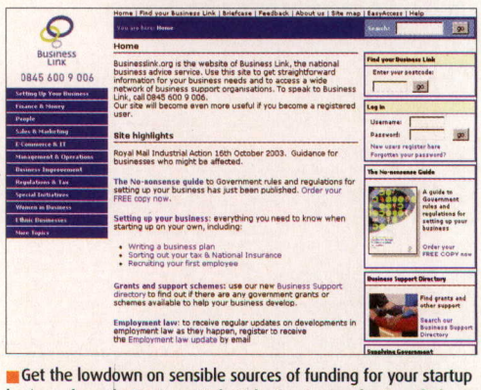
I want one of those

At one time everyone wanted a slice of the Web pie. It seemed like a simple enough premise: concoct an elaborate idea for a business, get a memorable domain name, post a suave online experience, and the venture capital, advertising revenue and customers alike will be queuing outside your virtual doors. Many dotcom businesses fashioned themselves solely around a Web site, and if little else, the roll-call of failures is testament to the fact that it takes more than a memorable domain name to create a sustainable online business. For example, furniture.com, jewelry.com, living.com, hardware.com, auctions.com and politics.com all closed.

The businesses least likely to succeed on the Web are those that think the rules of normal business practice do not apply: proper, chastened marketing, a long-term plan for investment, repayment and profit, customer care and years of hard work. Leaving aside the accurate science of hindsight, industry analysts predicted the dotcom bust quite early on, but also that the shake-up would ultimately benefit the Internet commerce sector. The companies left afterwards, such as Amazon and eBay, would be solvent, well-grounded and with sound investors (as opposed to those who jumped aboard hoping for a fast return in soaring stock prices).

While high street retailers in the UK had rather a dismal season last year, customers spent almost £2 billion online, and Internet shopping has been growing steadily over the past few years. Of course, these figures don't discriminate between the businesses that operate solely on the Web and those bricks-and-mortar businesses that have adopted an online presence. For example, Tesco.com is one of the largest online retailers in the UK.

It seems the dotcom boom has been instrumental in teaching people the importance of the Web. Opportunities are still there for realistic startups to bloom and, like their established competitors, they'll be more driven to finding realistic ways of using the Web to build revenue, not spend it. Without such a sudden boom and bust, it might have taken years longer for eCommerce to mature. ■



Get the lowdown on sensible sources of funding for your startup business from the Business Link Web site at **www.businesslink.org**

Java - Unix - Microsoft - ASP - PHP - Cold Fusion - MSSQL- MySQL - Access

Dedicated Servers - Co-location - Resellers - Domains - SMS services - ADSL - Telephone Technical Support

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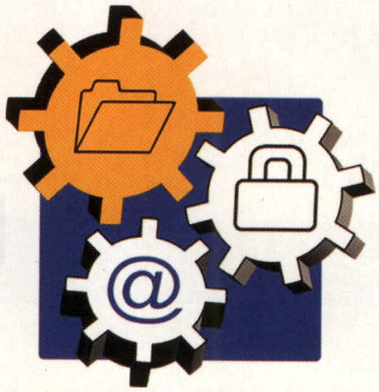
Web Hosting



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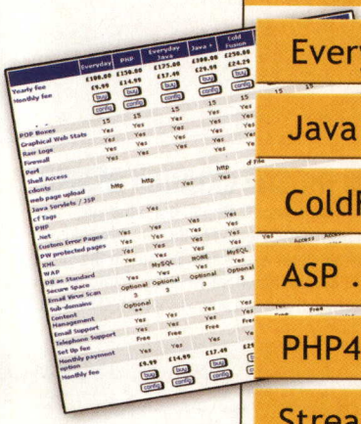
Fully Configurable Hosting Plans



- Everyday Hosting
- Java Servlet Hosting
- ColdFusion MX Hosting
- ASP .Net Hosting
- PHP4 Hosting
- Streaming Media Hosting

Standard Features

Web mail access
Comprehensive graphical web stats
Raw logs for external analysis
Web control panels
WAP and mobile compatible
Free password protected pages
Industry standard CISCO firewalls
24/7 FTP access
24/7 monitoring
Unlimited email aliases
Auto email responders
No banners at any time
Free holding pages on parked domains
Free sub-domains

Additional Features

Virus scanning - edge scanning provides best protection
Spam manager - flag, block or bounce
Search engines - improve your ranking

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TUTORIAL: eCOMMERCE
CUSTOMISE THE LOOK OF YOUR OSCOMMERCE SHOP

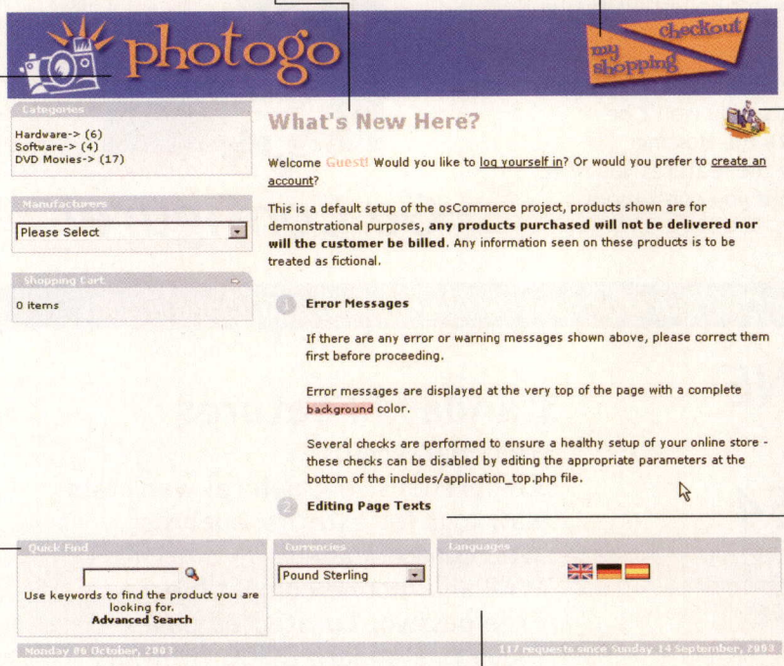
THE EXPERT: JAMES SEABRIGHT

James is a freelance Web designer and writer who specialises in hand coding. He is a former Technical Editor of *Practical Internet*, and has been writing for the magazine since 1997. We picked James to write the eCommerce tutorial because, spanning ten issues, it will call upon many aspects of Web design – and, with his experience and multitude of skills, James was the perfect choice.

Logo
This logo refers to the photography-related shop which we're creating as part of the tutorial

Introduction
This text will eventually change to introduce our site – this is the standard osCommerce introduction

Buttons
These buttons, linked using an image map, give quick access to the checkout and shopping cart



Clipart
This is a standard osCommerce item of clipart. We'll look next issue at how to use your own

Page content
We've cropped some of the page content from here. Normally there'd be a listing of new products, but we've removed that from the screenshot

Search box
The nature of the site we're creating means search facilities aren't a top priority, but you may want to move your search box to a more prominent location

Boxes
Unlike the standard osCommerce design of running these boxes down the left and right of the page, we've opted to have them running horizontally at the bottom

PART TWO

CUSTOMISE THE LOOK OF YOUR OSCOMMERCE SHOP

THE BRIEF

TUTORIAL OBJECTIVE
Create a basic new template for the shop with DW MX and the STS add-on

SKILL LEVEL

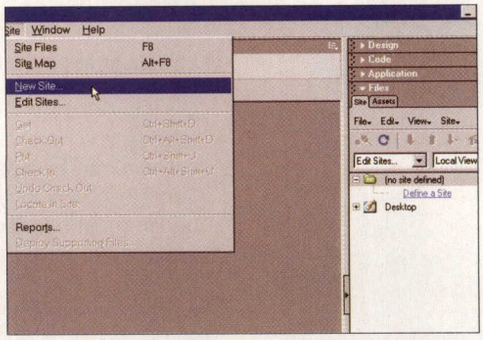
TIME REQUIRED
90 minutes

ON THE DISC
eCommerce/
Tutorial files:
tutorial files [folder]
simple template system [folder]

This month we install some add-on software to help customise the appearance of our site

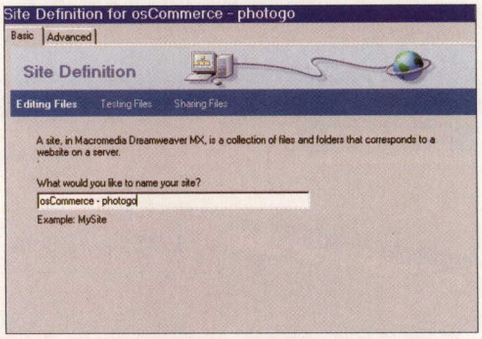
Yes, this is the second part of our tutorial on creating a fully featured online shop, but don't worry if you didn't catch the first instalment. Last issue's tutorial introduced osCommerce, which is a highly adaptable, open source piece of software that allows you to create a powerful online shop with minimal hassle. By the end of that tutorial, we'd installed osCommerce and configured some of its basic settings.

As promised last issue, we're going to look at templates this time around, and specifically how they can be used to make the shop look unique and not as though you're just stuck with the basic design of the osCommerce system. To help us achieve this, we'll employ two other software tools: Macromedia Dreamweaver MX and the Simple Template System add-on to osCommerce. The second of these is free of charge and on this issue's cover CD; the first is not free. Have a read of the Expert Advice panel for more on why we're using Dreamweaver and how it's not a disaster if you don't want to do the same. ■



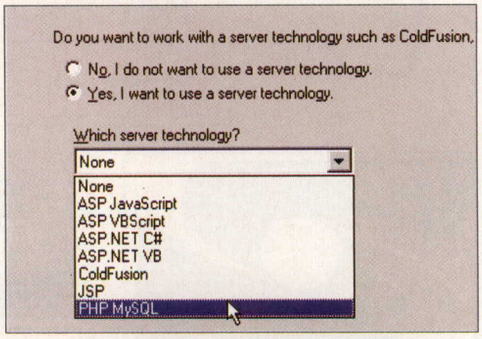
1 DEFINING THE SITE IN DREAMWEAVER

To get osCommerce and Dreamweaver working together, we need to set up a connection to your online catalogue in Dreamweaver. This is known as a 'Site Definition'. To set it up, open the Site menu in Dreamweaver and select the New Site option.



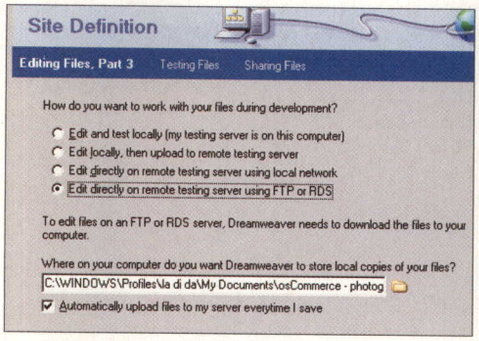
2 USING THE SITE CREATION WIZARD

You'll be taken step by step through the Site Definition, using the basic method in the Site Definition window. First of all, enter a name for the site in the Site Definition panel. It's not important what this name is – it's just to distinguish between sites on your computer. Click Next.



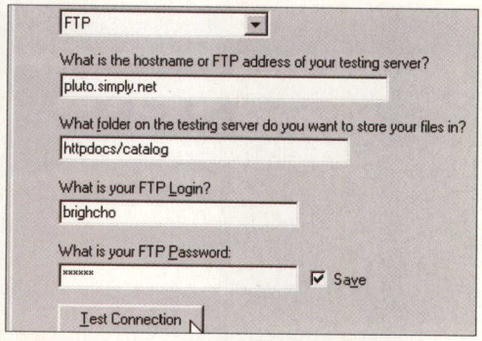
3 SELECTING A SERVER TECHNOLOGY

There are various different standards available to create dynamic Web content, and Dreamweaver supports many of them. To fit in with the system used by osCommerce, select PHP MySQL from the Which Server Technology drop-down menu and then click Next.



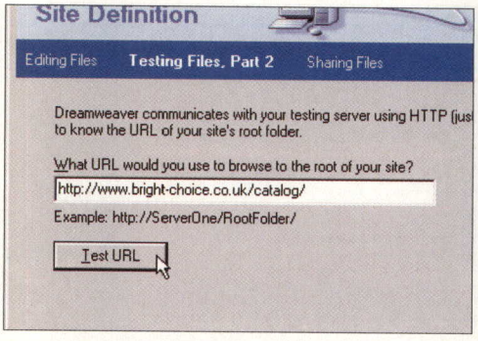
4 SETTING THE WORKING METHOD

When presented with the options for ways of testing out your pages, click the button next to 'Edit directly on remote testing server using FTP'. The wizard will automatically suggest a name for a new folder in which you can store local files. Click Next.



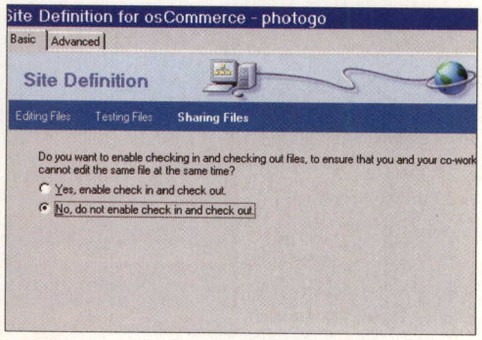
5 ENTERING SERVER LOG-IN DETAILS

Select FTP in the first drop-down menu; now enter your Web server login details in the boxes that appear. Enter the path to the Catalog folder in the What Folder box. Click Test Connection and when the test is successfully completed, click Next to move on.



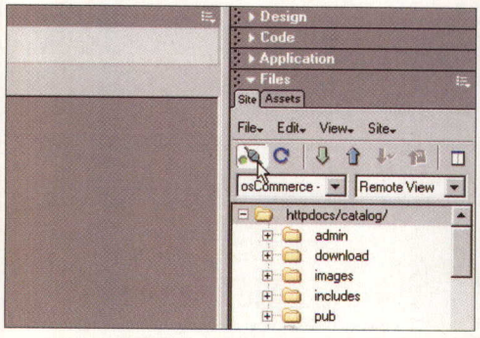
6 SPECIFYING SHOP WEB ADDRESS

The Web address that Dreamweaver automatically shows in this screen is based on the FTP server address you entered, so it is probably incorrect. Correct the URL to point at the Catalog folder on your Web server. Click on Test URL to check that it works okay, then click Next.



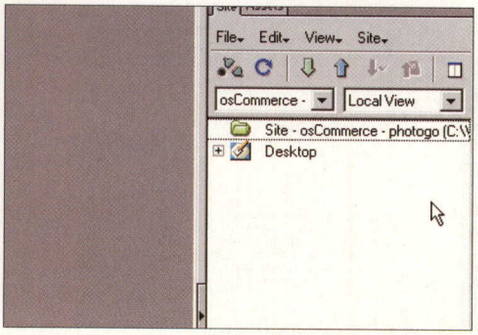
7 CHECKING OUT OF CHECK IN

Unless you'll be working with others on developing the site, there's no need to activate the Check In and Out feature. Just click Next, and you'll see a summary of your settings. Click Done to finish this setup process, and the Site Definition window will close.



8 CONNECTING TO THE SERVER

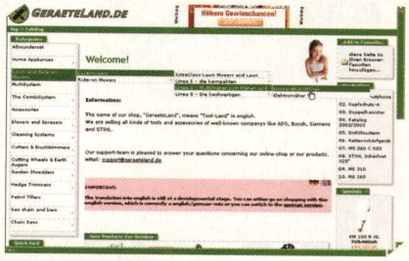
The definition you've just created will now be listed in the Site panel on the right of the Dreamweaver window. Click the top left button in the panel, which looks like two plugs, to connect to the Web server. You'll see the file listing of the Catalog directory appear.



9 INSTALL THE SIMPLE TEMPLATE SYSTEM

Click on the drop-down menu labelled Remote View and select Local View. This shows the folder on your hard drive created to store files related to the site. Right-click on the green folder and select New Folder from the menu that appears. Type 'includes' and press Return to name the folder.

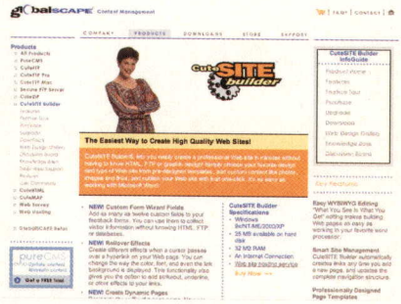
BOOKMARKS



GERAETELAND

www.geraeteland.de

This snappily named German shop offers a scarily comprehensive range of tools. You may find it more interesting for its implementation of a hierarchical Category menu, which you could work into your own site by downloading the HV Menu contribution from **www.oscommerce.com**.



CUTE SITE BUILDER

www.globalscape.com/cutesitebuilder

If Dreamweaver is simply too much for your budget, an alternative you might consider is the less expensive Cute Site Builder from the same people who make CuteFTP. Surprisingly high powered – considering it only costs $70 (£42).

EXPERT ADVICE

THE STUFF DREAMS ARE MADE OF

Macromedia Dreamweaver is admittedly not the cheapest Web-editing package we could have chosen to use as part of this tutorial, although you can get a 30-day free trial of it from **www.macromedia.com**. The reason for choosing it to help build the site is it allows easy editing of the PHP files that make up osCommerce's shopping system, and can handle the fact that we need to work with the online versions of those files, not ones on your hard disk. Also, it's quite a nifty piece of software in its own right, and will allow you to design the look of the site with ease. But ultimately, the emphasis of this tutorial is on osCommerce and not designing a Web site with Dreamweaver, so you could use a freeware FTP program and a basic text editor without losing out too much on what's being covered here.

CUSTOMISE THE LOOK OF YOUR OSCOMMERCE SHOP

GEEK SPEAK

ALT TEXT

When placing an image on a Web page, you should always make use of the Alt property of the IMG tag to describe the image in text form. This is useful to everyone if the image fails to load for whatever reason, and it's essential for people with visual disabilities who rely on these text descriptions to make sense of the Web.

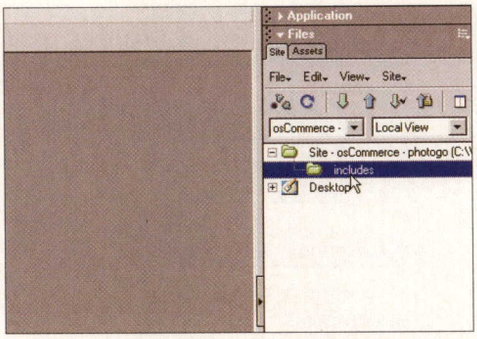
IMAGE MAP

It's possible to make different areas of an image link to different Web pages using an image map. The original use of this system was indeed with maps, allowing areas of a graphical map to link to a specific page on a Web site. It's now commonly used as part of site navigation systems, where it's not practical or possible to split the image up into individual graphics which can each be linked normally.

EXPERT ADVICE

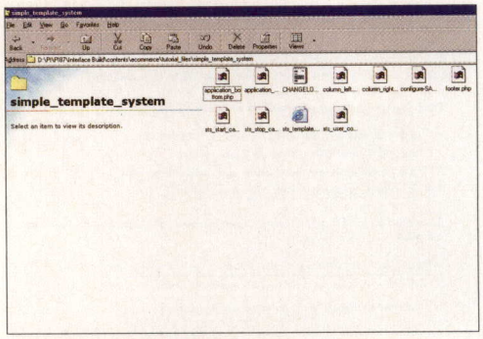
TEMPLATE FILE CHARADES

Step 30 in the tutorial refers you to this panel for an explanation of why such a complicated method of uploading the Template file to the Web server has been adopted. The reason is that while the Template page is stored in the Includes folder, when it's served to the visitor the page comes from the Catalog folder instead. This means that if you set up links within the template as if it were in the Includes folder, they would all fail when the template is shown live. So we have to create and design the Template file within the local Category folder and resist Dreamweaver's attempts to alter the link and image references when it is moved to the Includes folder. To avoid confusion, always make changes to the local version of the file, and then upload and move the file, rather than doing direct edits to the online template.



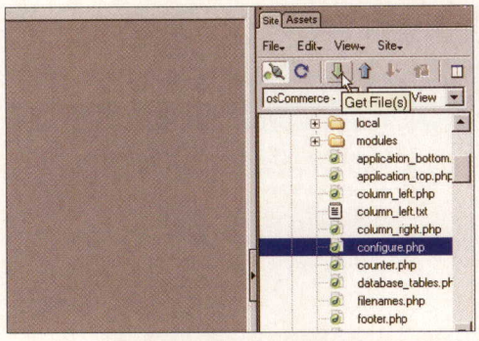
10 EXPLAINING THE INCLUDES FOLDER

The Includes folder you just created already exists on your Web server, and contains various configuration files for osCommerce. To install the Simple Template System add-on, we need to add some extra files to that folder, which is why we've created a folder on your hard disk with the same name.



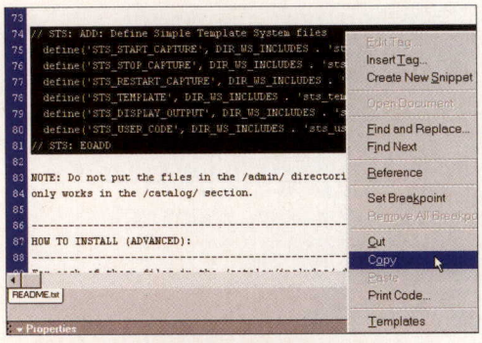
11 GET THE STS FILES

The cover CD has a folder containing the Simple Template System: click on the link in the eCommerce section to bring up the relevant folder. You should be able to see all of the files above – if you double-click on the HTML file, you'll be able to view the blank template in action.



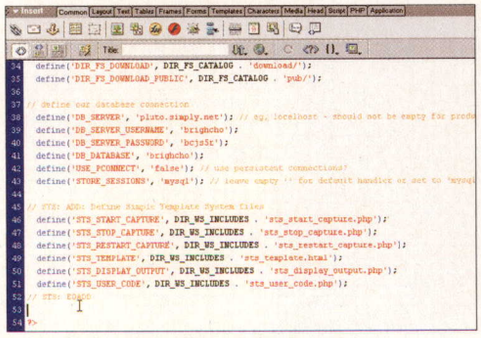
12 DOWNLOAD THE CONFIGURATION FILE

Back in Dreamweaver, switch your Site panel to Remote View using the drop-down menu that currently reads Local View. Click on the Plus sign next to the Includes folder. Find configure.php, click on it and click the Get Files button. Respond 'No' to the question about dependent files.



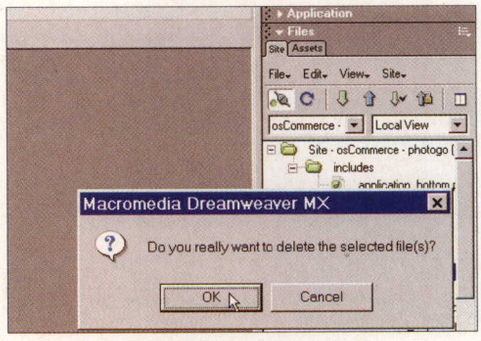
13 STS CONFIGURATION CODE

Switch to the Local View in the Site panel. Double-click on Readme.txt in the Includes folder. Scroll down to line 74 and select all the text to line 81 as shown above. Right-click anywhere on the selected text and pick Copy from the pop-up menu that appears.



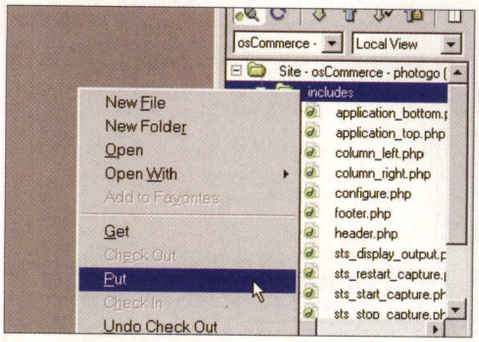
14 PASTING INTO CONFIGURE.PHP

Close Readme.txt and open configure.php from the Site panel. Click the Show Code View button in the top left of the window, and scroll to the end. Position the cursor just before the last line and right-click, selecting Paste from the menu that appears. Open the File menu and select Save.



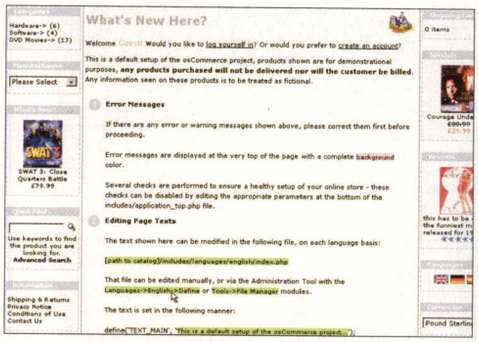
15 DELETE DEFUNCT STS FILES

Back in the Site panel, right-click on each of the following files and select Delete in the pop-up menu that appears: CHANGELOG.txt, configure-SAMPLE.php and README.txt. In each case, confirm that you want to delete the file when prompted.



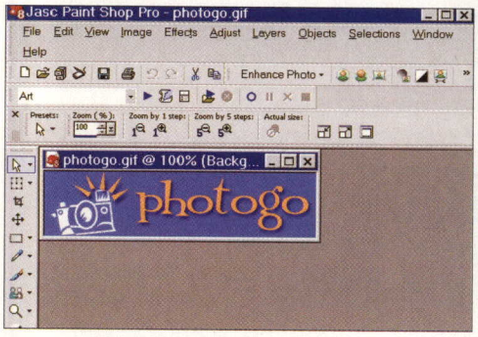
16 UPLOAD STS FILES

Now we're ready to upload the STS files. Right-click on the Includes folder and select Put from the pop-up menu that appears. This will start transferring the contents of the local Includes folder to the one on your server. When you're asked to confirm the file replacement, click Yes to All.



17 SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

Load up the main page of your shop, and you should see basically the same layout as before. The only two differences will be that table borders have appeared, helping you see how the template system is divided up, and a copyright message for STS will feature at the bottom.



18 START TO ADAPT THE LOOK

In order to start making the shop look more unique than it does at the moment, you need to create some custom graphics. To find out how to prepare a logo for going on the Web, take a look at the Technique panel on these pages before moving on.

IN DETAIL: SIMPLE TEMPLATE SYSTEM (STS)

STS makes it easy for you to alter the look of your osCommerce shop by creating a template

STS is one of the hundreds of 'contributions' available for osCommerce which extend or alter the basic features of the software. As an open source project, osCommerce is constantly developing, and new versions often include features that were previously created as contributions. Basically, STS reworks the way in which each page served by osCommerce is put together.

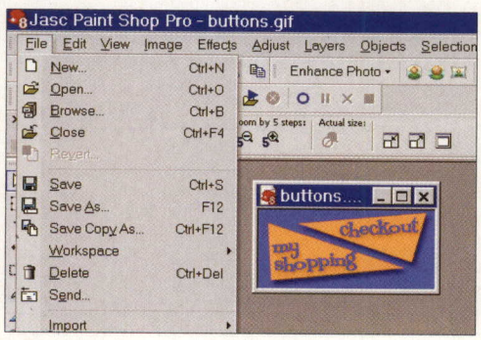
The standard osCommerce installation does not make it easy for the user to alter the look of a shop to any great degree. STS redresses this balance by allowing the user to create a template by which all pages served through osCommerce will be designed.

To integrate elements of the osCommerce system into the template, certain variables are used. They have a dollar symbol at the start of their name. All the user has to do is design the page as they want it, and then insert the variables in the places where the related chunks of content should appear. The table shown here explains some of the variables' purposes.

The variables relating to osCommerce boxes are more self-explanatory, so here is a list of them without explanation: $categorybox, $manufacturerbox, $whatsnewbox, $searchbox, $informationbox, $cartbox, $maninfobox, $orderhistorybox, $bestsellersbox, $specialfriendbox, $reviewsbox, $languagebox, $currenciesbox.

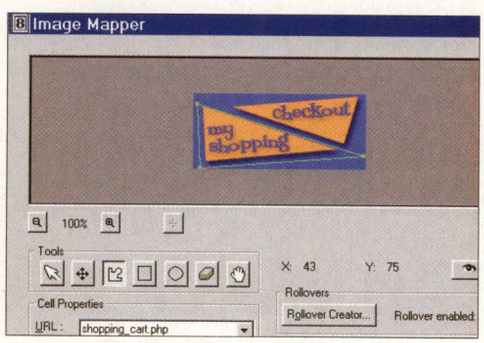
We've excluded a few from this list and table for reasons of space. The full list is available in the documentation provided with STS. ■

VARIABLE	WHAT IS DISPLAYED
$cataloglogo	The osCommerce logo, linked to the front page of the catalogue
$myaccount	The My Account graphic linked to that page
$cartcontents	The Shopping Cart graphic linked to that page
$checkout	The Checkout graphic linked to that page
$breadcrumbs	A line of linked text showing where the current page is in the site structure
$content	The main page content, as appropriate to the current page location
$date	The date according to the Web server where osCommerce is running
$numrequests	A line of text detailing the number of hits made to the catalogue, and since when
$footer	The date, Hit counter and osCommerce copyright information
$banner	If configured, an advertising banner linked to the relevant page



19 CREATE AN IMAGE MAP

The Photogo site design features a joint graphic for My Shopping and Checkout. To detect which of these the visitor is clicking on, we need to employ an image map. This is easily made using Paint Shop Pro's Image Mapper in the Export section of the File menu.



20 DRAW AREAS TO LINK

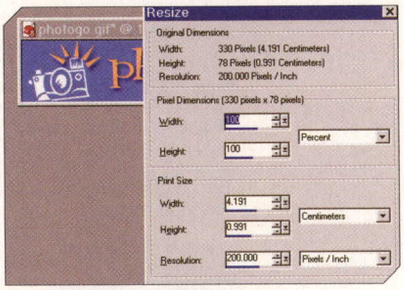
To map out an area for linking, click on the third button in the Tools panel and click at each corner of the area to link. Then enter the relevant link in the URL box. For the Cart Contents link this is 'shopping_cart.php'. Also type a description into Alt Text.

TUTORIAL: eCOMMERCE
CUSTOMISE THE LOOK OF YOUR OSCOMMERCE SHOP

TECHNIQUE

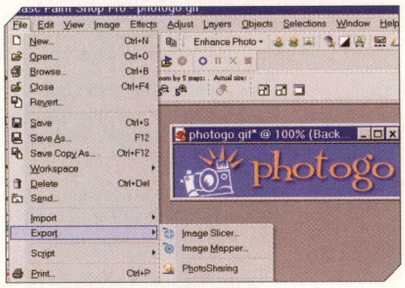
YOUR LOGO

An important part of any site is its logo. This can be a version of your standard business logo or something knocked together from a little clipart. Here we show how to make sure your logo is in the right size and format for the Web, using the popular PSP 8 (free trial from **www.jasc.com**).



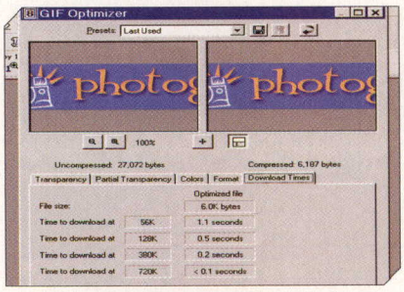
1 RESIZING THE IMAGE

Make sure your image is an appropriate size for the Web by going to the Resize item in the Image menu. Ideally you don't want anything wider than 300 pixels or taller than 100, and the resolution should be 72dpi. Make any changes you need to here, then click OK to put them into effect.



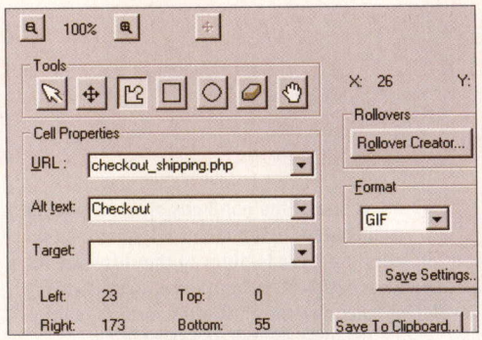
2 OPTIMISING YOUR FILE

Now to save the file. Paint Shop Pro has a rather nifty feature for optimising graphics to make them as efficient as possible for the Web. GIF is generally the most appropriate format for a logo, so open the Export section of the File menu and select GIF Optimizer.



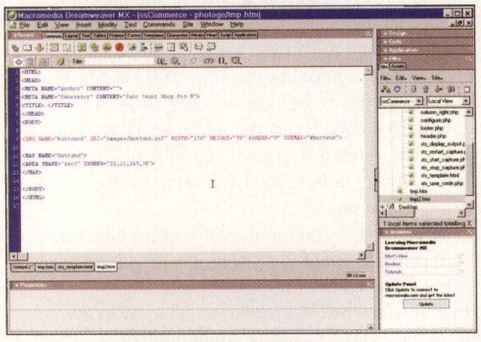
3 CHECKING OPTIMISATION SETTINGS

It's vital to get the right balance between quality of image and speed of download. The Download Times tab will tell you exactly what size the image will be with the current optimisation settings. Click Use Wizard if you're unsure about which settings are best. Now click OK and save the logo to the Images directory of your local site folder.



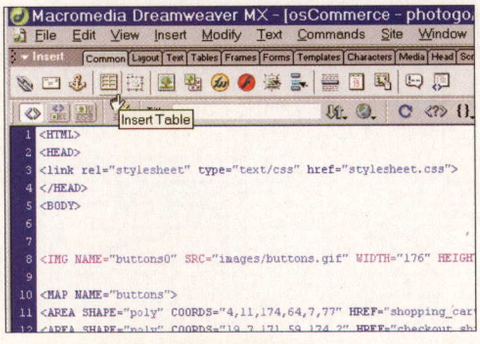
21 LINKING TO THE CHECKOUT

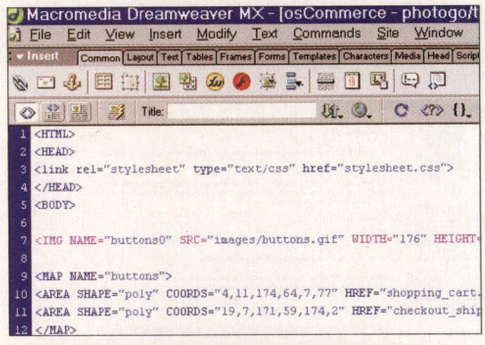
The process outlined in step 20 is repeated for the second area of the image map. The link in question here is checkout_shipping.php. When this information has been entered, click Save. When prompted, locate the Local Site folder, and enter 'Template' as the filename.



23 CREATE A PAGE STRUCTURE

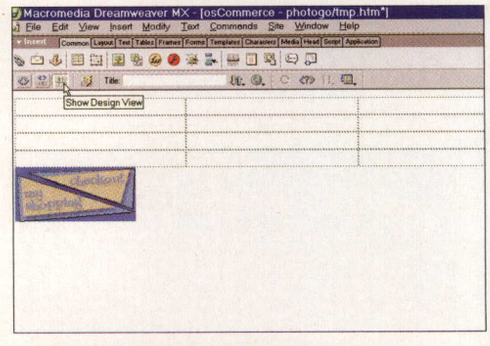
Switch back to Dreamweaver, and open the file template.htm which you've created in Paint Shop Pro. We're going to adapt the template.htm file to create a template for your site. You can go your own way in design terms, but a suggested page structure will be built over the next few steps.





24 LINKING TO THE STYLE SHEET

Delete lines three to five and replace them with this code: **<link rel="stylesheet" type="text/css" href="stylesheet.css">**. This will ensure the correct style sheet for the site is used. We'll look next issue at adapting the style sheet to suit your own design needs.

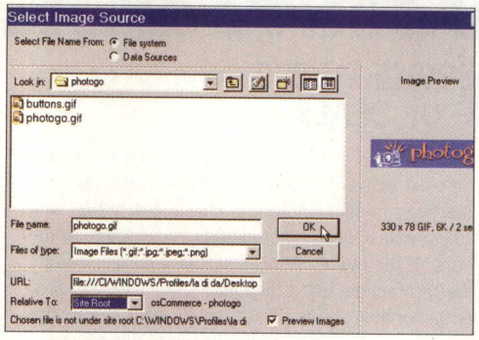


25 TABLE-BASED DESIGN

We're going to create a table-based structure for the page, although one which is deliberately different to the osCommerce default. To start doing this, move your cursor to just after the **<BODY>** tag, and click the Insert Table button – the fourth item in the Common tab of the button bar.

26 SPECIFY TABLE SETTINGS

Change the settings in the dialog to create a 750-pixel wide table of 4 rows and 3 columns, with a cell padding of 3, a cell spacing of zero and a border of zero. Click the Show Design View button and you'll see the empty table in position.

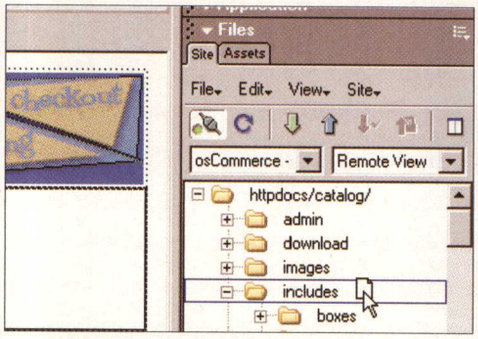


27 ADD YOUR SITE LOGO

Drag the button image to the top right-hand cell of the table, and then switch to the top left cell and use the Insert Image button to add your site logo. When prompted, opt to copy it into the Images folder of your local site directory.

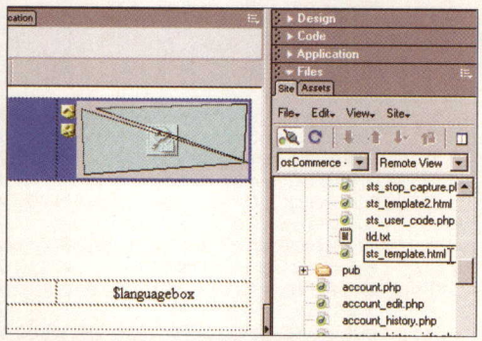
28 ARRANGING STS VARIABLES

See the In Detail panel for an explanation of the dollar symbol codes used by the Simple Template System. These have been added to the table design as shown above. In some cases, table cells have been merged using the Merge button in the Properties panel.



29 SAVING AND MOVING THE FILE

Press Control & S to save the file, which will automatically upload it to the Web server. Switch to Remote View in the Site panel and locate the file you just saved. Drag it to the Includes folder and click No if asked whether links should be updated.

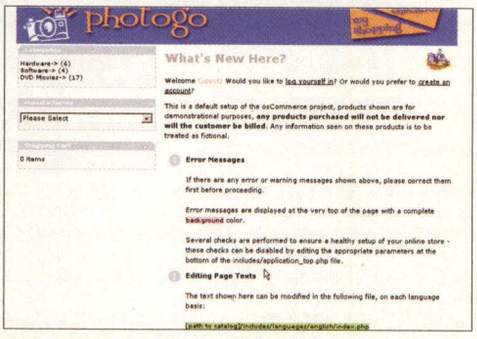


30 RENAME THE TEMPLATE FILE

Still in the Includes folder, right-click on sts_template.html and select Rename. Add a '2' to its filename, and then rename the recently uploaded file to 'sts_template.html'. See the Expert Advice panel for an explanation of why this charade is necessary!

31 PUT YOUR IMAGES ONLINE

Switch back to Local View in the Site panel and locate the Images folder. Right-click on it and select Put in the pop-up menu that appears. The contents of the folder will then be uploaded to your Web server.



32 CHECKING THE SITE ONLINE

Go to your Web browser and open the Catalog main page. This is just the start of adapting the osCommerce template to your own requirements. Eventually it won't look anything like the original design. In the next issue we'll start the process by rewriting the site style sheet.

EXPERT ADVICE

LINKING TO IMAGES

As already explained in the panel 'Template charades', you need to think carefully about the links you make when working with osCommerce. The same applies to images, because there are quite a few potential pitfalls to avoid in how you link to them when designing templates and new pages for your shop. Basically, you will be in the clear as long as your image links are relative. Make sure you link to '**images/mylogo.gif**' and never to 'http://www.mysite.com/catalog/images/mylogo.gif'. The second method would work initially, but will then lead to errors when you create a secure area of the site to handle credit card transactions. In such situations, even images must be transmitted in an encrypted form to avoid security alerts. By specifying that you're using the 'http' protocol and not the secure 'https' protocol, it causes a problem. If you think the path is correct but images still don't appear, check that you've actually uploaded them to the server in the right directory – this is a surprisingly easy mistake to make.

YOUR NEXT MOVE

THINK ABOUT WHAT YOU WANT

This tutorial and the previous issue's have focused on setting up software and not much on actually getting to grips with making the online shop you want to create. These are necessary steps, and now they're done we have more freedom to explore the design side of things. Next issue's tutorial is about adapting the style sheet and stock features of osCommerce, and will require you to have a clear idea of how you want your online shop to look. Think about what it needs to do, the sort of customers it should attract, even basic things like what colours it should use in its design. Look at other online shops and work out what looks good and what makes one shop better than another. You'll then be in a good position to make the most of the coming instalments.

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PICK THE PERFECT WEB HOSTING DEAL

FROM ECOMMERCE TO PERSONAL HOSTING, FIND THE HOSTING SERVICE THAT'S PERFECT FOR YOUR NEEDS WITH OUR COMPREHENSIVE ROUND-UP OF DEALS

Picking a Web host is a decision often left to the end of the Web creation process. Let's face it, we've all been guilty of concentrating so much on the design of the site that we've ignored the importance of signing up for a good hosting deal. Hosting is of the utmost importance, though – after all, this is where your site will be housed, so it's imperative that you find a service that not only provides you with the services you need, but also with good reliability.

That's why we've scoured the Net to find a selection of relevant deals that should help you ascertain the service that's perfect for you. The aim in compiling this guide is to allow you to see the different types of packages available and help you glean some idea of the costs you're likely to face. While we haven't included every single deal offered by the firms included, we have listed the products that we think are most relevant to our readers.

Our listings contain the categories that we think will be most relevant to you. With this in mind, we hope that we can help you pick the hosting deal that will suit you best – don't just jump in and sign up on the basis of the figures you see on these pages, though. We recommend using the information below to pick out a handful of firms that cater for your needs. The next step is to contact each directly to discuss your requirements further.

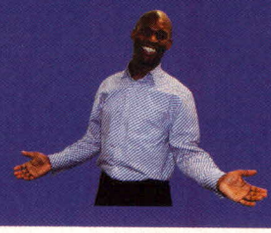
KEEPING UP TO DATE

While we try and ensure that all the information in our listings is up to date, the occasional error does creep through. If you would like to update your current details, drop an email to **webdesigner@paragon.co.uk** with the information you would like changed.

NAME AND URL	PACKAGE	PHONE NUMBER	COST PER YEAR	WEB SPACE	MONTHLY BANDWIDTH	POP3 ACCOUNTS	FRONTPAGE EXTENSIONS	DATABASE SUPPORT	SHOPPING CART	VIRUS FILTER	FIREWALL	PHONE SUPPORT	EMAIL SUPPORT	WEB CONTROL PANEL	SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT
1&1 (www.oneandone.co.uk)	Starters	08708 503 305	£26.06	25MB		20	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗
1&1 (www.oneandone.co.uk)	Home (Linux)	08708 503 305	£70.36	500MB	3Gb	100	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗
1&1 (www.oneandone.co.uk)	Home (MS)	08708 503 305	£84.46	500MB	3Gb	100	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗
1&1 (www.oneandone.co.uk)	Business (Linux)	08708 503 305	£126.76	1GB	10Gb	300	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
1&1 (www.oneandone.co.uk)	Business (MS)	08708 503 305	£140.86	1GB	10Gb	300	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
1&1 (www.oneandone.co.uk)	Professional (Linux)	08708 503 305	£239.56	2GB	40Gb	1000	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
1&1 (www.oneandone.co.uk)	Professional (MS)	08708 503 305	£281.86	2GB	40Gb	1000	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
123 reg www.123-reg.co.uk	Regular	0900 11 22 123	45.87	250Mb	10	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
123 reg www.123-reg.co.uk	Xtra	0900 11 22 123	269.87	500Mb	25	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
123-reg (www.123-reg.co.uk)	123-reg xtra	0900 2211123	£59.88	500Mb	2Gb	25	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗
2020Media (www.2020media.com)	Everyday	0845 166 7456	£100	100Mb	2Gb	Unlimited	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2020Media (www.2020media.com)	PHP	0845 166 7456	£150	100Mb	2Gb	Unlimited	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
2020Media (www.2020media.com)	JAVA Tomcat	0845 166 7456	£175	100Mb	2Gb	Unlimited	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2020Media (www.2020media.com)	Coldfusion	0845 166 7456	£250	100Mb	2Gb	Unlimited	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4d hosting (www.4dhosting.com)	Bronze Package	0845 166 8386	£40.00	10Mb	500Mb	2	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
4d hosting (www.4dhosting.com)	Gold Package	0845 166 8386	£79.99	50Mb	2Gb	50	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
4d hosting (www.4dhosting.com)	Titanium Package	0845 166 8386	£149.99	500Mb	5Gb	500	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4d hosting (www.4dhosting.com)	Reseller Package	0845 166 8386	£299.99	1Gb	10Gb	1000	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Alien Hosting (www.alien-hosting.net)	HomeHost	0870 746 1507	£30.00	100Mb	512Mb	30	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗
Alien Hosting (www.alien-hosting.net)	Pro-Host	0870 746 1507	£60.00	250Mb	1Gb	100	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗
Alien Hosting (www.alien-hosting.net)	E-Comm	0870 746 1507	£150.00	500Mb	5Gb	300	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗
Amen (www.amen.uk.com)	windows	0870 444 6778	150	300	-	unlimited	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
Amen (www.amen.uk.com)	linux	0870 444 6778	150	300	-	unlimited	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
Amen (www.amen.uk.com)	platinum	0870 444 6778	156	200	-	unlimited	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
Amen (www.amen.uk.com)	platinum	0870 444 6778	258	300	-	unlimited	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
9NetAvenue (www.9netave.uk.net)	Starter	0870 8726560	99	50	1.5Gb	10	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
9NetAvenue (www.9netave.uk.net)	Professional	0870 8726560	199	100	2.5Gb	25	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
9NetAvenue (www.9netave.uk.net)	Corporate	0870 8726560	399	500	5Gb	100	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
BeamHost (www.beamhost.co.uk)	Economy	0871 277 9827	£120	1Gb	50Gb	300	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗
Cheapnet (www.cheapnet.co.uk)	ISP For Small Businesses	0870 516 8160	£96	Unlimited	10Gb	Unlimited	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Christian Technology Ltd (www.christiantechnology.co.uk)	Base Package	0870 742 0530	£94	25Mb	1Gb	Unlimited	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Clara.net (www.clara.net)	Clarahost Lite	0845 355 1000	29.99	10	1Gb	10	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Clara.net (www.clara.net)	Clarahost Advanced	0845 355 1000	699	500	30Gb	200	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
CWCS Managed Hosting (www.cwcs.co.uk)	CWCS Entry Package	0870 703 1000	£120	100Mb	1.5Gb	5	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
DataGate (www.datagate.co.uk)	Exchange Hosting	08000 19 98 19	From £204	100Mb	Unlimited	0	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
DataGate (www.datagate.co.uk)	Unix Shared Business Hosting	08000 19 98 19	£249	200Mb	6Gb	100	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Datex (www.datex.net)	Level1	0800 652 2110	185	50	1gb	10	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Datex (www.datex.net)	Level2	0800 652 2110	259	100	2gb	25	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Datex (www.datex.net)	Level3	0800 652 2110	330	200	3Gb	50	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Datex (www.datex.net)	Level4	0800 652 2110	369	300	4Gb	80	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Datex (www.datex.net)	Level5	0800 652 2110	409	400	5Gb	120	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Datex (www.datex.net)	Level6	0800 652 2110	549	600	6Gb	200	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
dc-hosting (dc-hosting.com)	Personal	n/a	£25	10Mb	256Mb	5	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗
dc-hosting (dc-hosting.com)	Professional Bronze	n/a	£40	100Mb	512Mb	10	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗

- Domain Names
- Virtual Web Hosting
- Dedicated Solutions
- Custom Enterprise Servers

- Advanced Control Panel
- Windows or Linux platforms
- 30 Day Money Back Guarantee
- Award winning Support



NAME AND URL	PACKAGE	PHONE NUMBER	COST PER YEAR	WEB SPACE	MONTHLY BANDWIDTH	POP3 ACCOUNTS	FRONTPAGE EXTENSIONS	DATABASE SUPPORT	SHOPPING CART	VIRUS FILTER	FIREWALL	PHONE SUPPORT	EMAIL SUPPORT	WEB CONTROL PANEL	SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT
dc-hosting (dc-hosting.com)	Professional Silver	n/a	£80	200Mb	1Gb	20	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗
dc-hosting (dc-hosting.com)	Professional Gold	n/a	£140	300Mb	2Gb	30	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗
dc-hosting (dc-hosting.com)	Professional Platinum	n/a	£250	500Mb	4Gb	50	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗
Dedicated Servers (www.dedicated-servers.co.uk)	Linux entry	0870 333 0365	99/month	40gb	30Gb	variable	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dedicated Servers (www.dedicated-servers.co.uk)	Windows entry	0870 333 0365	199/month	40gb	30Gb	variable	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Donhost (www.donhost.co.uk)	Reseller Unix	0870 7414151	£470	Unlimited	20Gb	Unlimited	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Donhost (www.donhost.co.uk)	Reseller Windows	0870 7414151	£587.50	Unlimited	20Gb	Unlimited	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Donhost (www.donhost.co.uk)	Enterprise Plan	0870 7414151	£105.75	100Mb	2Gb	20	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Donhost (www.donhost.co.uk)	Commerce Plan	0870 7414151	£211.50	250Mb	5Gb	50	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Donhost (www.donhost.co.uk)	Designer Plan	0870 7414151	£141	100Mb	2Gb	20	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Donhost (www.donhost.co.uk)	Developer Plan	0870 741415	£305.50	250Mb	5Gb	50	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Dziner Solutions (www.dzinersolutions.co.uk)	Windows Shared	n/a	44.99	100	2Gb	100	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
Dziner Solutions (www.dzinersolutions.co.uk)	Unix Shared Starter	n/a	19.99	50	1Gb	10	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
Dziner Solutions (www.dzinersolutions.co.uk)	Unix Shared Standard	n/a	44.99	100	2Gb	100	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
Dziner Solutions (www.dzinersolutions.co.uk)	Unix Shared Premier	n/a	79.99	200	3Gb	200	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
Efficient Hosting (www.efficienthosting.co.uk)	Basic Plan	070 2097 1262	£131.40	50Mb	1.5Gb	5	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗
Efficient Hosting (www.efficienthosting.co.uk)	Standard Plan	070 2097 1262	£191.40	100Mb	3Gb	40	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗
Efficient Hosting (www.efficienthosting.co.uk)	Advanced Plan	070 2097 1262	£251.40	150Mb	5Gb	100	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗
Efficient Hosting (www.efficienthosting.co.uk)	Professional Plan	070 2097 1262	£311.40	300Mb	6Gb	200	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗
eHosting (www.ehosting.co.uk)	Home & Business 200 Account	0161 236 2241	£49.99	200Mb	10Gb	50	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
EliteUKServe (eliteukserve.net)	Business Kick Start Linux	0871 717 0390	49	50	3Gb	20	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
EliteUKServe (eliteukserve.net)	Business Kick Start Windows	0871 717 0390	75	50	3Gb	20	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
EliteUKServe (eliteukserve.net)	Business Standard Linux	0871 717 0390	99	100	3Gb	100	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
EliteUKServe (eliteukserve.net)	Windows	0871 717 0390	125	100	3Gb	100	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
EliteUKServe (eliteukserve.net)	Business Enterprise Linux	0871 717 0390	199	250	5Gb	250	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
EliteUKServe (eliteukserve.net)	Business Enterprise Windows	0871 717 0390	225	250	5Gb	250	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
EliteUKServe (eliteukserve.net)	Business Pro Linux	0871 717 0390	399	500	10Gb	500	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
FastHosts (www.fasthosts.co.uk)	Business	0870 888 3600	149.99	2Gb	n/a	unlimited	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
FastHosts (www.fasthosts.co.uk)	Business Pro	0870 888 3600	249.99	5Gb	n/a	unlimited	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
FastHosts (www.fasthosts.co.uk)	Net Pro	0870 888 3600	299.99	3Gb	n/a	unlimited	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
FastHosts (www.fasthosts.co.uk)	Net Standard	0870 888 3600	199.99	2Gb	n/a	unlimited	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
FastHosts (www.fasthosts.co.uk)	Starter	0870 888 3600	19.99	100	n/a	15	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
FastHosts (www.fasthosts.co.uk)	Home	0870 888 3600	49.99	500	n/a	100	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
FastHosts (www.fasthosts.co.uk)	Home Pro	0870 888 3600	69.99	1Gb	n/a	300	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Giacom (www.giacom.net)	Business Pro	0800 542 7500	199	100	2Gb	100	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hostextra (www.hostextra.co.uk)	Pro-Host	08702 501 500	99.45	100	10Gb	200		✓				✓	✓	✓	
Global Gold (www.globalgold.co.uk)	Unix launcher	0870 004 4444	78	50	5gb	5	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Global Gold (www.globalgold.co.uk)	NT launcher		180	50	5gb	5	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
HaiSoft (www.haisoft.co.uk)	HaiSoft Perso	0870 080 4247	£14.90	100Mb	1Gb	Unlimited	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
HaiSoft (www.haisoft.co.uk)	HaiSoft Pro	0870 080 4247	£49.90	500Mb	10Gb	Unlimited	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
HaiSoft (www.haisoft.co.uk)	HaiSoft eCommerce	0870 080 4247	£99.90	750Mb	20Gb	Unlimited	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
HostSupreme (www.hostsupreme.co.uk)	Windows 2000 Unlimited Plan	0208 777 8881	£99.50	Unlimited	Unmetered	Unlimited	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
HostSupreme (www.hostsupreme.co.uk)		0208 777 8881	£99.50	1Gb	5Gb	1000	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hostway (www.hostway-uk.com)	Silver	0808 180 1880	£89.95	100Mb	1Gb	5	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗
Hostway (www.hostway-uk.com)	Gold	0808 180 1880	£134.55	200Mb	4Gb	10	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Hostway (www.hostway-uk.com)	Gold Plus	0808 180 1880	£179.55	200Mb	6Gb	30	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Hostway (www.hostway-uk.com)	Platinum	0808 180 1880	£449.55	500Mb	10Gb	50	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Hostway (www.hostway-uk.com)	Platinum Plus	0808 180 1880	£809.95	500Mb	15Gb	100	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Hostway (www.hostway-uk.com)	Email Plus	0808 180 1880	£49.95	50Mb	n/a	5	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
Hotchilli (www.hotchilli.com)	Windows Silver	08702 555 555	175	50	2Gb	10	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hotchilli (www.hotchilli.com)	Windows Gold	08702 555 555	295	100	3Gb	25	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hotchilli (www.hotchilli.com)	Windows Platinum	08702 555 555	355	200	5Gb	50	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hotchilli (www.hotchilli.com)	Silver	08702 555 555	115	100	2Gb	10	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hotchilli (www.hotchilli.com)	Linux Gold	08702 555 555	175	200	3Gb	25	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hotchilli (www.hotchilli.com)	Linux Platinum	08702 555 555	295	400	5Gb	50	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ideal Hosting (idealhosting.co.uk)	Lite	08712 773494	14.99	25	1Gb	5	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ideal Hosting (idealhosting.co.uk)	Starter	08712 773494	23.49	50	1Gb	20	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ideal Hosting (idealhosting.co.uk)	Standard	08712 773494	52.49	100	1Gb	50	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ideal Hosting (idealhosting.co.uk)	Professional	08712 773494	68.99	250	1Gb	unlimited	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ideal Hosting (idealhosting.co.uk)	Business	08712 773494	119.99	500	1Gb	unlimited	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ideal Hosting (idealhosting.co.uk)	Corporate	08712 773494	199.99	1000	1Gb	unlimited	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Internetters (www.internetters.co.uk)	Unix Basic 50	0870 160 5555	70	50	1Gb	5	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Internetters (www.internetters.co.uk)	Unix Frontpage 50	0870 160 5555	100	50	1Gb	5	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Internetters (www.internetters.co.uk)	Unix Standard 200	0870 160 5555	160	200	2Gb	20	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Internetters (www.internetters.co.uk)	Unix Superior 500	0870 160 5555	220	500	3Gb	50	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Internetters (www.internetters.co.uk)	Windows 50	0870 160 5555	100	50	1Gb	5	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Internetters (www.internetters.co.uk)	Windows 200	0870 160 5555	190	200	2Gb	20	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Internetters (www.internetters.co.uk)	Windows 500	0870 160 5555	260	500	3Gb	50	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Inweb (www.inweb.co.uk)	Example1	0800 612222	200	50	2.5Gb	1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Magic Moments www.magic-moments.com	Magic Entry	0115 917 0000	99.95	600Mb	1	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Magic Moments www.magic-moments.com	Magic Pro	0115 917 0000	199.95	1000Mb	1000	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	

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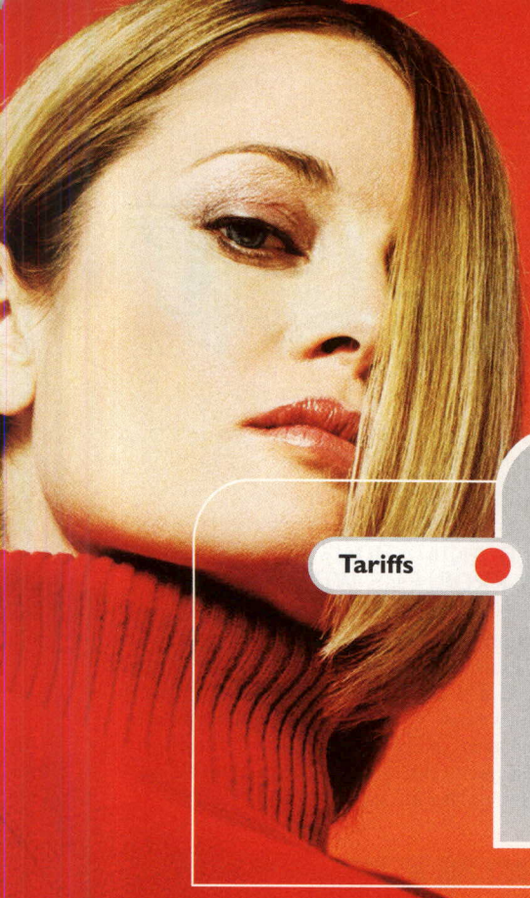
Magic Moments www.magic-moments.com	Magic Business	0115 917 0000	199	1000Mb	1000	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Magic Moments www.magic-moments.com	Magic Business e-commerce	0115 917 0000	499	1000Mb	1000	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Magic Moments www.magic-moments.com	Magic Reseller	0115 917 0000	500	Unlimited	Unlimited	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	
NameHog (www.namehog.net)	Home User Package	0870 9059 444	£35.25	50Mb	500Mb	5	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
NameHog (www.namehog.net)	Advanced User Package	0870 9059 444	£58.75	100Mb	750Mb	10	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
NameHog (www.namehog.net)	Small Business Package	0870 9059 444	£82.25	175Mb	1Gb	15	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
NameHog (www.namehog.net)	Large Business Package	0870 9059 444	£105.75	300Mb	1.2Gb	20	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
NameHog (www.namehog.net)	Premium Business Package	0870 9059 444	£176.25	500Mb	1.5Gb	50	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
NetBenefit (www.netbenefit.com)	Business Package	0870 264 2298	£199	100Mb	2Gb	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Netcetera (www.inetc.net)	Home package	0800 2987 214	£60	100Mb	2Gb	1	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Netcetera (www.inetc.net)	Commerce	0800 2987 214	£180	200Mb	4Gb	10	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Netcetera (www.inetc.net)	Reseller	0800 2987 214	£450	2Gb	20Gb	Unlimited	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Netcetera (www.inetc.net)	.NETppliance 2000	0800 2987 214	£2000	80Gb	12Gb	Unlimited	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Netcetera (www.inetc.net)	.NETppliance 2400	0800 2987 214	£3000	160Gb	24Gb	Unlimited	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Netcetera (www.inetc.net)	.NETppliance 3000	0800 2987 214	£4000	2x73Gb SCSI	30Gb	Unlimited	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Netcetera (www.inetc.net)	.NETppliance 1800	0800 2987 214	£780	40Gb	20Gb	Unlimited	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Netplan Internet Solutions (www.netplan.co.uk)	Windows Shared .net Basic	0870 751 8345	120	50	1Gb	1	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Netplan Internet Solutions (www.netplan.co.uk)	Windows Shared .net Moderate	0870 751 8345	200	80	2Gb	10	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Netplan Internet Solutions (www.netplan.co.uk)	Windows Shared .net large	0870 751 8345	350	100	3.5Gb	40	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Netplan Internet Solutions (www.netplan.co.uk)	Windows Shared .net Carrier	0870 751 8345	600	200	5Gb	80	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Netplan Internet Solutions (www.netplan.co.uk)	Linux Shared Hostplan Basic	0870 751 8345	65	100	500Mb	1	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Netplan Internet Solutions (www.netplan.co.uk)	Linux Shared Hostplan Professional	0870 751 8345	140	200	1Gb	10	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Netplan Internet Solutions (www.netplan.co.uk)	Shared Hostplan Large	0870 751 8345	200	300	3Gb	25	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Netplan Internet Solutions (www.netplan.co.uk)	Shared Hostplan Carrier	0870 751 8345	500	2Gb	5Gb	50	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Netscalibur (www.netscalibur.com)	Netscalibur Web Unix	0800 072 0000	324	100	5Gb	1	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
Netscalibur (www.netscalibur.com)	Netscalibur Web Windows	0800 072 0000	324	100	5Gb	1	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
NewNet (www.newnet.co.uk)	Standard Hosting	01329 226722	50	0	0	1	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓
NewNet (www.newnet.co.uk)	Business Bronze Unix	01329 226722	100	250	250Mb	1	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
NewNet (www.newnet.co.uk)	Business Gold Unix	01329 226722	149	1Gb	1Gb	1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
NewNet (www.newnet.co.uk)	Business Gold Windows	01329 226722	149	1Gb	1Gb	1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
Pay As You Host (www.pay-as-you-host.com)	Standard	0870 284 0287	£47.88	50Mb	512Mb	Unlimited	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Positive Internet Company (www.positive-internet.com)	Z account	0800 316 1006	£293.75	120Mb	10Gb	Unlimited	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗
Positive Internet Company (www.positive-internet.com)	Dolphin	0800 316 1006	£2172.58	2x20Gb	40-60Gb	Unlimited	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗
Positive Internet Company (www.positive-internet.com)	Fully managed servers	0800 316 1006	*£5287.50	2x70Gb SCSI	80-250Gb	Unlimited	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Simply (www.simply.com)	Simply Basic	01684 893020	47.88	10Mb	1Gb	1	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
Simply (www.simply.com)	Simply Soho	01684 893020	71.88	250Mb	3Gb	10	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
Simply (www.simply.com)	Simply Enterprise	01684 893020	107.88	500Mb	10Gb	50	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Simply (www.simply.com)	Simply Corporate	01684 893020	203.88	1Gb	20Gb	100	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Simply (www.simply.com)	Simply Designer	01684 893020	239.88	1Gb	20Gb	200	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Simply (www.simply.com)	Simply Reseller	01684 893020	479.88	unlimited	30Gb	unlimited	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Skymarket (www.skymarket.co.uk)	Standard 1	0800 321 7788	49	10Mb	2Gb	1	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Skymarket (www.skymarket.co.uk)	Standard 2	0800 321 7788	69	20Mb	2Gb	1	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Skymarket (www.skymarket.co.uk)	Premium 1	0800 321 7788	99	25Mb	2Gb	1	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Skymarket (www.skymarket.co.uk)	Premium 2	0800 321 7788	149	50Mb	2Gb	1	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
SO Hosts (www.sohosts.com)	Standard	0845 644 1080	£29.99	500Mb	Unlimited	Unlimited	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
theName.co.uk (www.thename.co.uk)	Parking	08707 65 63 64	£52.88	25Mb	500Mb	15	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
theName.co.uk (www.thename.co.uk)	Forwarding	08707 65 63 64	From £15	n/a	500Mb	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
theName.co.uk (www.thename.co.uk)	Hosting	08707 65 63 64	From £7.50	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Titan Internet (www.titanhosts.net)	Win50	0845 125 9500	£58.75	50Mb	500Mb	5	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Titan Internet (www.titanhosts.net)	Win100	0845 125 9500	£117.50	100Mb	1Gb	20	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Titan Internet (www.titanhosts.net)	Win200	0845 125 9500	£235	200Mb	2Gb	Unlimited	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
ValueWebHosts (www.valuewebhosts.com)	Plan 1	n/a	£8.99	Unlimited	125Mb	Unlimited	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗
WebFusion (www.webfusion.co.uk)	Business Pro	0115 9170000	£199	100Mb	10Gb	1000	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗
WebFusion www.webfusion.co.uk	WebFusion Entry	0115 917 0000	99.95	600Mb	?	1	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
WebFusion www.webfusion.co.uk	WebFusion Pro	0115 917 0000	199.95	1000Mb	?	1000	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
WebFusion www.webfusion.co.uk	WebFusion Business	0115 917 0000	199	1000Mb	?	1000	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
WebFusion www.webfusion.co.uk	WebFusion Business eCommerce	0115 917 0000	499	1000Mb	?	1000	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
WebFusion www.webfusion.co.uk	WebFusion Reseller	0115 917 0000	500	Unlimited	?	Unlimited	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
Xcalibre (www.xcalibre.co.uk)	Hosting Standard	0870 050 0080	39.95	50Mb	1Gb	5	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
Xcalibre (www.xcalibre.co.uk)	Hosting Standard Plus	0870 050 0080	99.95	50Mb	2Gb	10	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Xcalibre (www.xcalibre.co.uk)	Hosting Business	0870 050 0080	79.95	100Mb	3Gb	15	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
Xcalibre (www.xcalibre.co.uk)	Hosting Business Plus	0870 050 0080	159.95	150Mb	4Gb	30	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Xcalibre (www.xcalibre.co.uk)	Hosting Professional	0870 050 0080	179.95	250Mb	7Gb	50	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
Xcalibre (www.xcalibre.co.uk)	Hosting Professional Plus	0870 050 0080	299	500Mb	10Gb	100	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Xcalibre (www.xcalibre.co.uk)	Standard Multiweb	0870 050 0080	64.95	75Mb	1.5Gb	10	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
Xcalibre (www.xcalibre.co.uk)	Standard Multiweb Plus	0870 050 0080	149.95	100Mb	2.5Gb	15	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Xcalibre (www.xcalibre.co.uk)	Business Multiweb	0870 050 0080	149.95	200Mb	4Gb	25	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
Xcalibre (www.xcalibre.co.uk)	Business Multiweb Plus	0870 050 0080	299	250Mb	5Gb	40	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Xcalibre (www.xcalibre.co.uk)	Professional Multiweb	0870 050 0080	249	500Mb	7.5Gb	100	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
Xcalibre (www.xcalibre.co.uk)	Professional Multiweb Plus	0870 050 0080	499	500Mb	10Gb	150	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓



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£26.99 plus VAT and set up	**£39.99 plus VAT and set up**	**£59.99 plus VAT and set up**
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• 20:1 Contention Ratio • 512 Kbps download • 256 Kbps upload • Static IP address	• 20:1 Contention Ratio • 1 Mbps download • 256 Kbps upload • Static IP address	• 20:1 Contention Ratio • 2 Mbps download • 256Kbps upload • Static IP address
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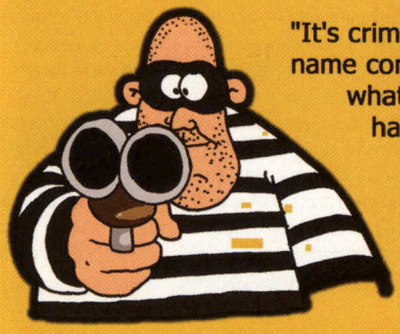
ADSL Broadband



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YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

TECH SUPPORT

THE EXPERTS

WHO'S ON CALL?

MARK SHUFFLEBOTTOM

Mark lectures on the BA Hons Interactive Media course at Bournemouth University, where he teaches digital imaging, interface design and 3D applications. Mark is our resident Flash expert, so send your vector-based animation anger to him and he'll find a cure. This issue, Mark spills his beans of wisdom on ActionScript, and also on the thorny issue of using sound on the Web.

CHRIS SCHMIDT

Chris is a freelance writer with specialist areas in topics as diverse as Dreamweaver and digital music creation. He is also a joint partner in the track5 Web design agency (**www.track5.co.uk**). All of this means that he's perfect to take charge of your Dreamweaver problems. Chris is also the man to cure your sites with a makeover – see his Site SOS on page 118.

GEORGE CAIANS

George is a freelance illustrator who specialises in Photoshop, After Effects and 3D modelling. We've procured George's formidable talents as our regular Photoshop expert, so any time you have a problem with your pixels or you're at a loss with layers, call upon George. This issue's Photoshop fun contains advice for would-be painters on turning your photographs into works of art.

PHILIP BENNISON

Philip has been working in new media for nearly a decade and has been writing coding tutorials for the past six years. Over his career, he's worked on everything from corporate Web sites to small business eCommerce enterprises. We've signed Philip up to be your Web page developer expert, so if your code and scripts are causing you strife, send him an email.

CONTACT US:

Tech Support,
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Highbury - Paragon,
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St Peter's Road,
Bournemouth, BH1 2JS

Email: techsupport@paragon.co.uk

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FLASH

HAVING PROBLEMS WITH VECTOR-BASED ANIMATION? ALLOW MARK SHUFFLEBOTTOM TO CURE YOUR PROBLEMS WITH A SMILE

ON THE MOVE

Q I was wondering what the best way to move between movies in Flash is. I'd like to create a Web site made of small Flash files that load when the user clicks the appropriate button to keep the bandwidth down.

James Barnett

A good question, as this is a great habit to get into to keep site download times to an absolute minimum. You'll find there's more than one way to load content into Flash.

The first is to load and replace the current Flash file in the HTML page. This is very easy to do, as you first have to construct a button and add the code as follows:

```
on(release){
        loadMovie("moviename.swf", 0);
}
```

Obviously rename the moviename.swf with the name of your Flash file, and this will do the job. You can of course load your content to another level of the movie. This is done by making one small amendment to the code, which will keep your first Flash movie loaded, while the new one will arrive above it with a transparent background, allowing the user to see through one to another:

```
on(release){
        loadMovie("moviename.swf", 1);
}
```

To remove the movie clip afterwards you can either load another movie clip to this layer or use the **unloadMovie(0);** inside the **on(release)** statement.

The final way of loading a movie into Flash is to use an empty movie clip as your target by giving it an instance name in the Properties palette. Your button should have this code attached to it:

```
on(release){
        loadMovie("moviename.swf", "instanceName");
}
```

In this example you replace the **instanceName** with the actual instance name of the blank movie clip. This is a good method to use if you have a variable to pass to the new file, as you reference it through the instance name as any other movie clip. I hope this helps you out, and it's worth playing with all three as they provide interesting interface opportunities.

READY FOR ACTION

Q I don't really understand when or where I should apply ActionScript in Flash. Can you help me out, as sometimes it's on a button, other times it's on a frame. What's the difference?

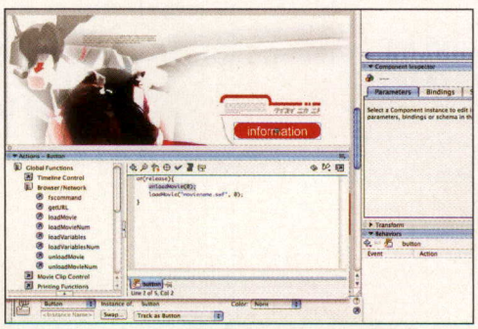
Dave Wilson

A ActionScript should be applied by selecting F9 to attach the script to either the symbol or the frame. As for when it should be attached, here is a simple guide. First, if it's a button, only code that's relevant to what the button does should be applied to it. For example, in the first question code, this code is contained in an event handler which dictates when this happens. In the case of our first answer this was the **on(release)** command, which is called when the mouse button is released. Code can be placed on the frame, such as **stop();** commands to stop the playhead from proceeding or when you are declaring variable values at the start of a project. Otherwise, relevant code can go on the individual instance that is being referred to. Again, this will require an event handler such as **onClipEvent(enterFrame)**, which will affect the instance any time the playhead is over it.

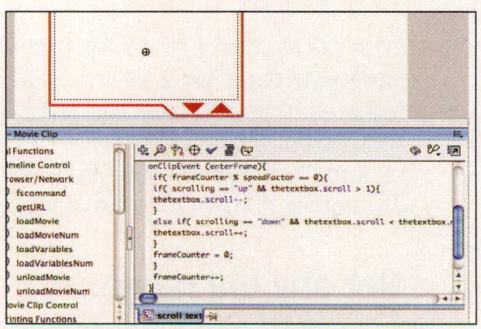
IN THE BACKGROUND

Q I'd like to add background sound to my Web site. Can you let me know any simple way to do this, as it can make the file quite bulky?

Andy Burke



Creating Flash movies that load other Flash movies may sound complicated, but it can make a huge difference to your site



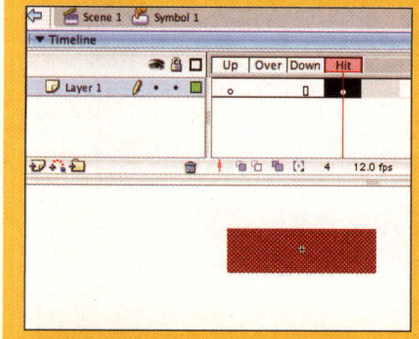
Learning when and where to use ActionScript is one of the most fundamental aspects of developing your Flash skills

EXPERT ADVICE

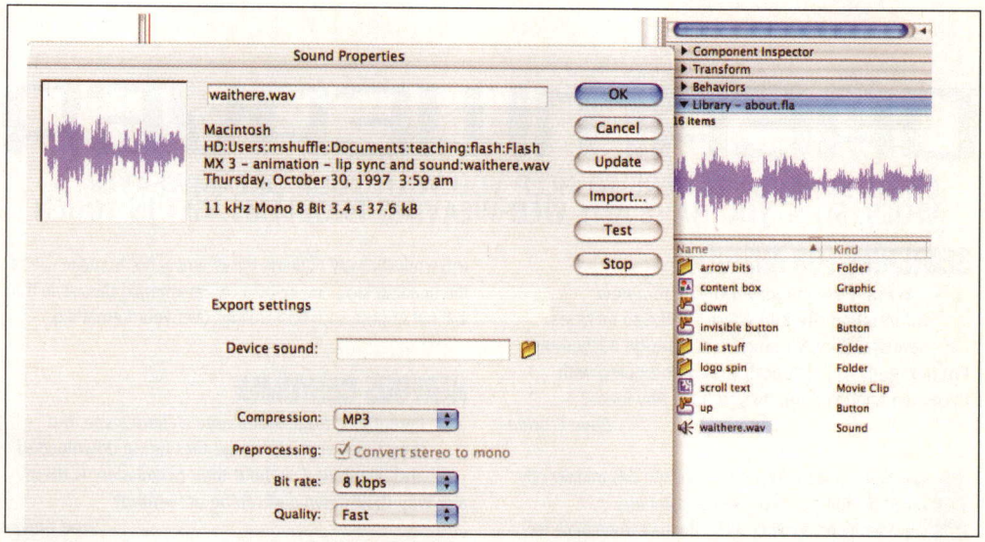
BUTTON TIP

MAKING AN INVISIBLE BUTTON

Most Flash designers know how to create buttons and use them to great effect, but not everyone is aware of the Invisible button. This is a button that can be placed over something such as text or an area in a photograph, but not be seen. To make the Invisible button you simply create a button with a Hit area only and no other states. Sometimes it can be useful to put a simple sound on the Over state to let the user know this is an area that will provide feedback. Once created, drop this over whatever you like to make it clickable.



■ To make the Invisible button, simply create a button with a Hit area and no other states



■ Once you've imported your sound file into Flash, it's always best to convert it into MP3. The prospect of making your visitors wait 15 minutes for a WAV file to download isn't a great one. For best results, change the bit rate to 8kbps

A Sound files are generally large, so they tend to make file sizes a little bulky. Exporting them as MP3s from Flash to keep the file size down is the easiest answer to that. To add to your Flash movie you can create a new layer on the timeline, and at the keyframe that you want the sound to play from select the Sound drop menu and choose the appropriate sound from the list. This assumes you have already imported the sound to the library.

An alternative way to help your Web page load faster is to have the sound in a completely separate Flash file exported as sound.swf, then use the third Load Movie technique from the answer to the first question to load it into an empty movie clip – which can even be positioned off the stage. This will allow your Flash page to load. The sound will then load separately, letting the user explore the content without having to wait for it. ■

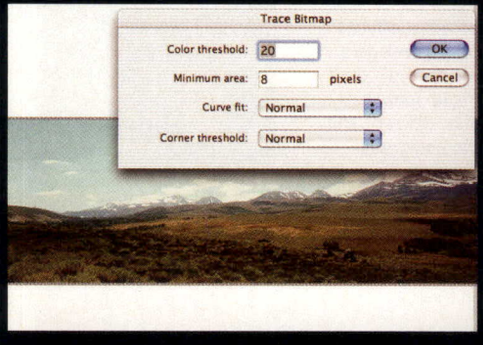
TECHNIQUE

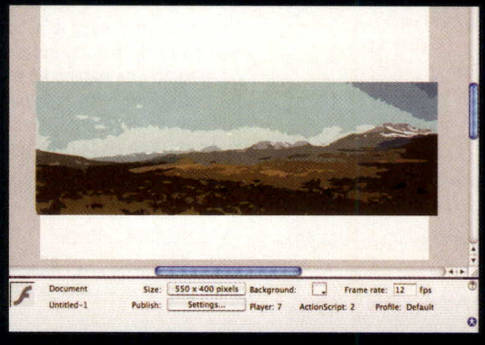
USING THE TRACE BITMAP OPTION

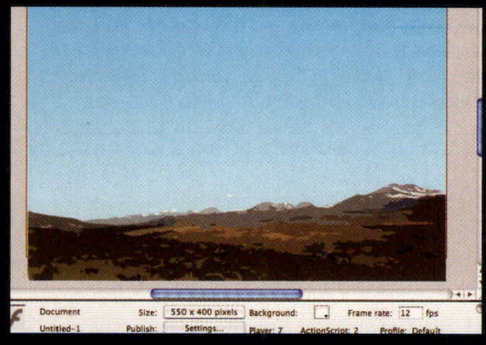
Q Can you give me some help with the Trace Bitmap option, as I'm really not sure how to use it and the results I get are quite unexpected.

Claire Davies

A Trace Bitmap can be a little wild to use, but it can quickly be tamed. There are some techniques you'll need to bear in mind first. Don't try and simply replicate an image that was a photograph as a vector, as this will undoubtedly make the file size much bigger than using the photograph, and this is not good. Instead make sure the quality is not quite so high, and you'll get less detail, which will in turn provide a smaller graphic. It might not look as great, but can look quite stylised with a bit of tweaking and careful use. The other technique is to try and optimise the graphic afterwards, which will reduce the number of curves, and again this will give you a saving in file size. ■







1 TRACE BITMAP

In the new Flash MX 2004 version the Trace Bitmap command is found under the Modify>Bitmap>Trace Bitmap menu. Once selected you will get a pop-up window. Reducing the colours will not reduce the quality but increase it, so this will generate a large file size.

2 INCREASE THE COLOUR

Increase the colour to around 80 and click OK – the result will be much less detail and a quicker trace. As you can see, the sky has come out a bit of a mess, but that can easily be fixed. A little retouching is all it takes to get a better result.

3 REMOVE THE SKY

With the Select tool, select areas of the sky and remove them by pressing the Delete button. Create a new layer and drag this to the background; now create a rectangle on this layer. You can then add a linear blend to replace the sky that was there before.

DREAMWEAVER

CHRIS SCHMIDT IS HERE TO HELP YOU WITH YOUR DREAMWEAVER WOES, SO IF YOU HAVE ANY WEB-WEAVING PROBLEMS, GET IN TOUCH

SEARCHING FOR ANSWERS

Q I'm using Dreamweaver to create a new information site into which I'd like to include a search facility. Coming from a design background I'm not really too technical, so can't be doing with excessive hand-coding. Do you have any ideas?

Dave Crackle

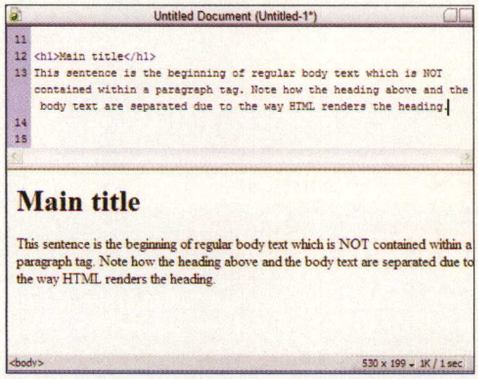
A Creating a search engine for your site has traditionally relied on advanced coding and database considerations, making such a feature impossible for designers like you. Fortunately, Dreamweaver extensions are available to cater for this. Take a trip to **www.macromedia.com/cfusion/exchange** and search through the Dreamweaver Exchange for the Atomz Search tool. Download and install this free extension to Dreamweaver through the Extensions Manager software and you'll soon have that elusive search engine running. Configuration is a doddle, and once up and running you'll get regular reports that give you some idea of the kind of content your site visitors are looking for.

SPACE PROBLEM

Q I'm getting to grips with CSS through Dreamweaver MX 2004, but am experiencing a few peculiar problems. I've configured my H1 tags to format using a particular font face, but also seem to have spacing issues surrounding any such heading instances. What's going on?

Peter Pringle

A This isn't so much a CSS issue as one relating to plain old HTML. The heading tags (H1, H2, etc.) have features in common with certain other regular HTML tags like the paragraph **<p>** and horizontal rule **<hr>**, which automatically create such spacing above and below the tag when rendered through the page. You might get round this by specifying a margin value of '0' within the CSS, but a more reliable way of doing this is simply not to make use of the heading tags, and instead create a simple class style that will not impose such basic rulings over your formatting.



This example shows regular HTML text formatted only with an **<H1>** tag around the title. The title and body copy are separated

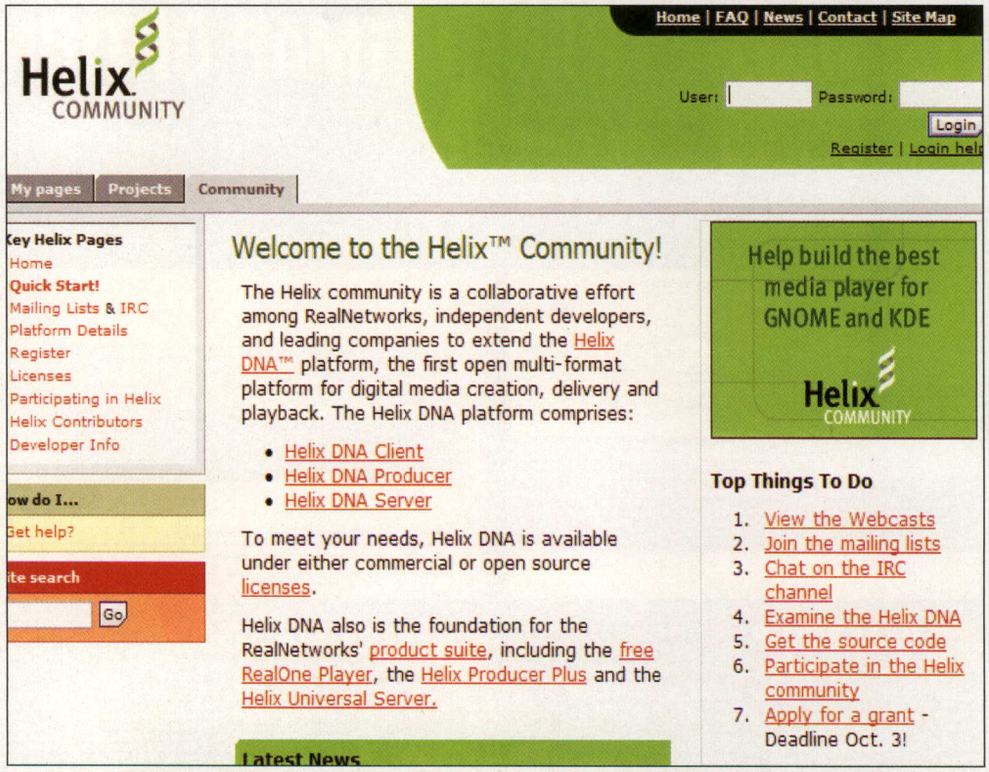
NERVOUS CUSTOMER

Q I want to include video onto a client's site, but they're nervous about the files being downloaded and distributed without their permission. Is there any way their download can be prevented?

Fred Glover

A We look into this in more detail in our feature on page 20. However, it comes down to the way your video is delivered. If a normal video clip is simply referenced through regular methods as Dreamweaver provides, anyone can either right-click the link to save the target or hunt down the file from their browser cache after viewing.

There will always be ways people can download movies from your site, but setting them up through a streaming server will improve the general security of your files. You may also want to consider the advanced video capabilities that Dreamweaver's cousin, Flash, provides. Again, with true streaming you run a far more secure method of delivery.



Real is still the most universal method of delivering video, although Flash is beginning to threaten its mantle. Check out **www.helixcommunity.org** for advice aimed at Web authors for best delivering their video through such methods

EXPERT ADVICE

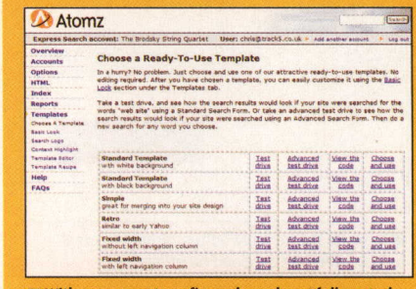
ATOMZ SEARCH

USING ATOMZ SEARCH

This popular Dreamweaver extension is easy to configure, but once you've downloaded and installed Atomz Search through the Extension Manager, you'll need to create an account with Atomz before you can continue. This is because the search is actually powered through their site following a visit from one of their spiders.

Once registered you have full control over the way the search works, and any pages or areas that should be ignored can be easily configured should you need to restrict access to any development or sensitive areas of your site.

An MX 2004 version is still being developed, although Dreamweaver MX and v4 users will be able to insert the feature into their site through a dedicated tab on the Insert panel.



With an account configured you have full control over how your search feature works. You can even use a template if revising the default is too daunting

PHOTOSHOP

GET YOUR PHOTOSHOP SKILLS UP TO SCRATCH, THANKS TO GEORGE CAIRNS' EXCELLENT ADVICE AND GUIDANCE

ANYONE FOR VENICE?

Q I'm trying to fake a painted look to turn my online holiday snaps into something more creative. Any tips other than just blasting on a filter?

Guy Whitfield, via email

A Before getting down to the creative nitty gritty, think about the subject of your work of art. For the faked-painting concept to work well you'll need to choose an image that someone would actually want to paint. A photograph happens in seconds, but a painter takes days to work out composition, colour and lighting.

We're going to use the History brush to paint multiple filters onto different sections of the original photo. Go to Filters>Brush Strokes>Accented Edges. Experiment with the settings to get a nice abstract look. Click OK. Open the History palette (Window>History). Click on the New Snapshot icon and label it Accented Edges. Click the original History snapshot, and the filter effect disappears. Add a Dry Brush filter to the scene and take a new History snapshot. Return to the original History snapshot. Again, the photo has no filters applied to it. Choose the History brush from the toolbar. Click to the left of the Accented Edges History snapshot and paint the filter onto everything but the people. Click next to the Dry Brush snapshot and paint that filter onto the people. This is a far more powerful way of creating a painted look, as you can apply broad impressionistic style brush strokes to the buildings and more detailed strokes to the people, which you couldn't do by blasting a filter onto the shot.

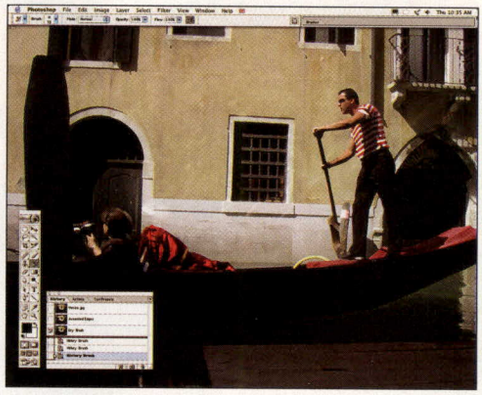
ACTION STATIONS

Q Have you any tips to speed up my workflow when using Photoshop's many tools?

Peter Manning, Birmingham

A A good way to speed things up is to use the Contextual menu. When using the Brush tool, for example, right-click (Control-click on a Mac) anywhere onscreen and up pops a floating window with different brush size options. This Contextual window means you can alter your brush size without having to move the cursor up to the Brush pre-set picker. Different tools show you options in the Contextual window (hence its name). If you right-click while using the Marquee tool for example, you can change the Feather setting of the tool after you've used it to make a selection.

You can also turn repetitive procedures into one-click events. Open the Actions palette (Window, Actions). Click the New Action icon. Here you can label the action and assign a keyboard command to activate it. Click Record, perform the events you want to combine; click Stop. You can now apply the action to any image by clicking the keyboard shortcut. ■



We plumped for this gondolier shot because we liked the colour, composition and lighting

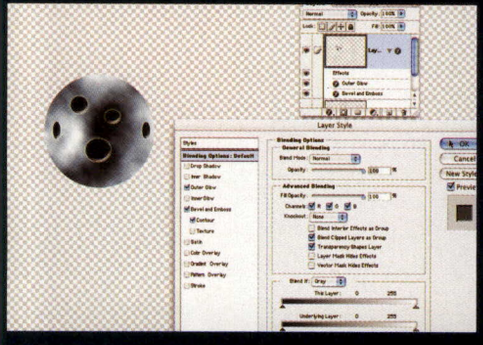
TECHNIQUE

PERFECT PATTERNS

Q What's a quick way of creating a background for my site that has repeating icons or objects? It takes ages to copy, paste and move components into position on multiple layers.

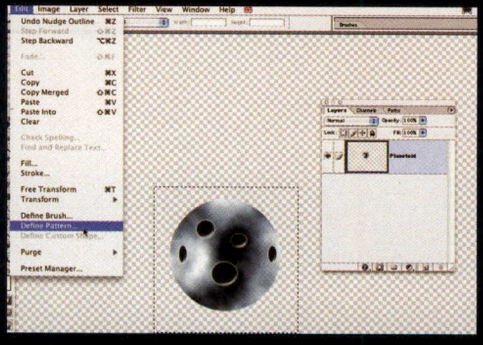
Sally Richards, via email

A Photoshop has many different ways of speeding up a task like this. The trick is to let it do all the work (well, nearly all the work – it is only a tool for your creativity after all!). In this walkthrough we'll create our icon and then get Photoshop to turn it into a repeating pattern. ■



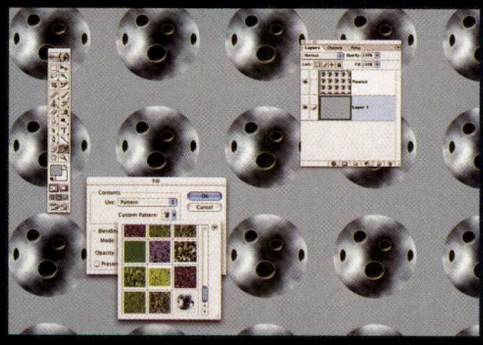
1 CREATE YOUR ICON

We knocked out this planetoid in seconds by filling a circular marquee with black and blue clouds (Filter, Render, Clouds). On a new layer we created circular black craters and double-clicked on the crater thumbnail to open the Layer Style window, where we applied Bevel and Emboss to the layer.



2 DEFINE THE PATTERN

Merge the planet and crater layers together. Make a selection around the planet using the Rectangular Marquee tool. The bigger the space you leave around the planet, the bigger the space you'll have between your multiple planetoids. Go to Edit>Define Pattern. Label your pattern.



3 APPLY THE PATTERN

Delete the original planetoid. Go to Edit>Fill and choose the Pattern option. Now you can scroll down to find your custom built pattern. Click OK and the pattern will fill whatever size file you apply it to. This is a much quicker way than copying, pasting and moving each planetoid into position.

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DEVELOPER

CODE AND SCRIPT CAN BE DIFFICULT BEDFELLOWS, BUT WITH **PHILIP BENNISON** ON YOUR SIDE, YOU CAN BEND THEM TO YOUR WILL

BEGINNER'S LUCK

Q I've been throwing together Web sites for the past year or so, but have next to no experience of programming other than this. Despite this, I've decided I need to learn how to 'script', but I've no idea where to start. I can't really afford to buy any of the (outrageously) expensive books that offer to teach you PHP or ASP in a few days, and the few Web sites I've taken a look at seem to be aimed at people with a little more technical know-how than myself.

Can you give me an idea of how I should proceed? Have I bitten off more than I can chew?

Joseph Leigh

A Programming is a lot less difficult than many people would have you believe, although it can be difficult for the complete novice. You need to find yourself a tutorial that will explain the basic principles involved. Unfortunately, I don't have enough space here to take you through it myself, but Web sites such as **www.w3schools.com** and **www.gurusnetwork.com/tutorials** make excellent guides for beginners.

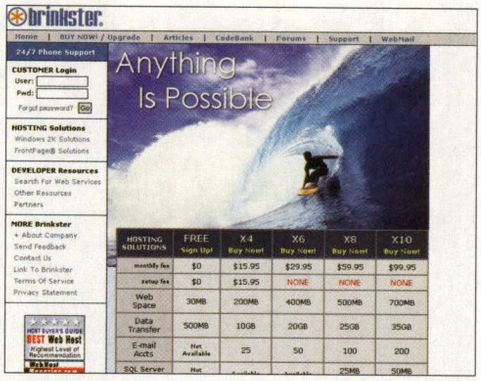
Take it slowly, and don't get frustrated if your progress is not as fast as you would like. Before you know it, you'll be coding away to your heart's content.

LOOKING FOR A HOST

Q I'm learning to program PHP but am handicapped somewhat by the fact that I'm using Windows 98, and am unable to upgrade because the computer belongs to my parents. I can't afford to pay for a host, and haven't been able to find a free Web host that offers PHP as part of the package. In fact, I'm beginning to suspect there isn't such a thing!

Lisa Benson

A You can actually download a copy of Apache HTTP Server (**www.apache.org**) that can be installed on Windows 98. This will let you host PHP sites on that Operating System, so there's no need to upgrade at all.



'Web hosting to the extreme' might be a slightly exaggerated claim, but Brinkster (**www.brinkster.com**) lets you use PHP

If, however, you're looking for a free Web host which allows you to code (or do any number of other things), take a look at **www.clickherefree.com**. This site lets you search their database of hosts and find one that meets your requirements.

TECHNIQUE

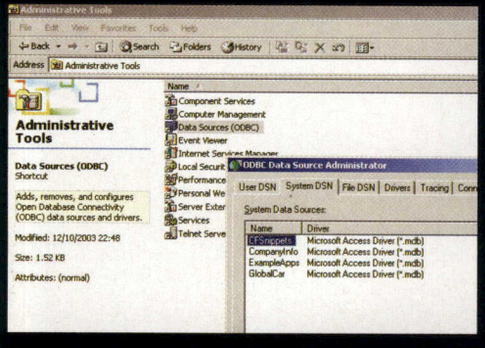
USING OPEN DATABASE CONNECTIVITY

Q I'm trying to use an Access database in my ASP script using ODBC. I've heard this is the best way to access a database using a Windows Operating System, but I'm kind of clueless as to what it involves or how to go about doing it. Can you help?

Robert Green

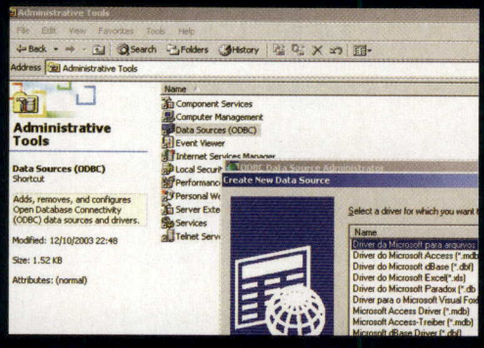
A In order to access a database using ODBC you have to create a data source. This isn't as difficult as it may sound. Just follow our simple three-step tutorial below.

Before you begin to create a data source, however, you need to know how to access the ODBC Data Source Administrator. To do this, open up the Control Panel and select Administrative Tools, where you'll find a shortcut to Data Sources (ODBC). From there, you can then carry out the following simple steps to create a data source that can be used on the Web.



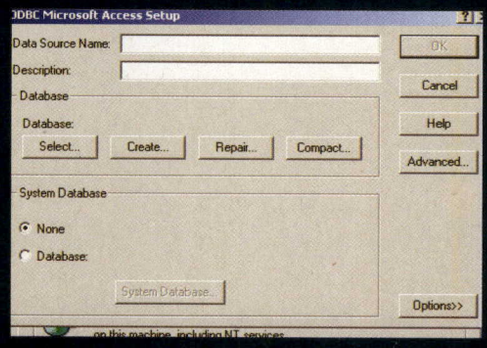
1 ADD NEW DATA SOURCE

Once the ODBC Data Source Administrator is open, select System DSN. You will now see a list of System Data sources currently available on your machine. Click Add in order to add a new data source. This will open up the Create New Data Source wizard.



2 SELECT THE DRIVER

You now need to select the type of data source driver you wish to create. The drivers are necessary to allow you to use the relevant database as a data source. If you don't see the driver listed, you'll probably have to download a driver for that source. If it's there, select the driver and click Finish.



3 SETUP WINDOW

Now you'll see the relevant setup window for the driver you've used. Enter a data source name – this is what you'll use to access the data source from the script. Hit Select and choose the database you wish to use. Click OK. You should see the data source listed in the System DSN window. Click OK.

MAKEOVER

SITE SOS

IN TRUE PUNK TRADITION, THE SUBMERSE WEB SITE IS AN ANARCHIC MESS. CHRIS SCHMIDT OFFERS SOME ADVICE ON HOW TO CLEAN THINGS UP FOR THE BAND...

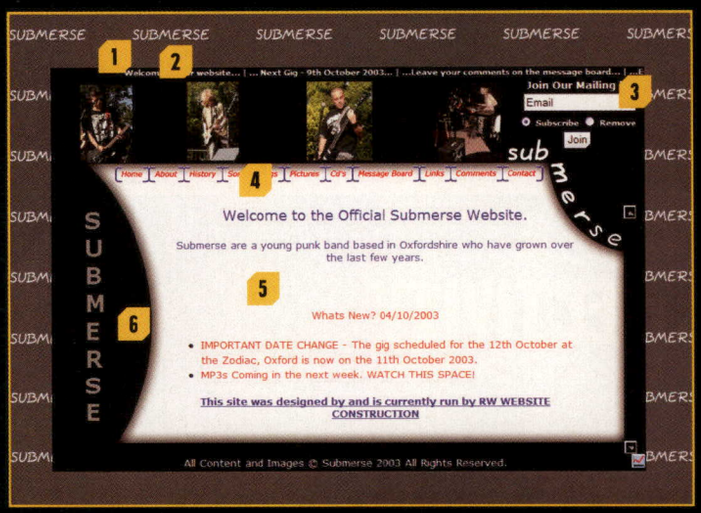
For a professionally designed site, the Submerse Web site at www.punk-o-rama.co.uk has many errors. The punk band's site suffers from many basic design flaws and functionality issues – we'd suggest a complete redesign in this instance.

The band is obviously keen to maintain their site and keep things current, as the up-to-date info implies, and the time and content they've invested shows dedication to keeping their fans in tune with what they're up to.

With eleven links available through the primary navigation, we've made suggestions as to how to streamline this to provide users with more focused options, and we've taken out the scrolling marquee that features at the head of the design in favour of a simple applet that scrolls within the page design.

The revised design was only possible via a process of research, as the home page design seen here provides the basic layout for every page. Content is refreshed within the main body area, but no images are forthcoming for CD artwork etc, other than photos of gigs. So we took some direction from one of the band members' related sites, which provided a bit more of a creative brief than is possible from the current site.

The seemingly unrelated domain name also presents a few issues, as there is no obvious correlation between that and the band, but by making the domain a little more prominent within the design, this hopefully will become familiar to regular visitors. ■



1 The background features a rather simplistic tile with the band name, that bears no relation to the main site design – a plain grey might have been better. It also edges right up to the borders of the main content design, leaving no breathing space between the foreground and background content.

2 A scrolling marquee cycles across the head of the page. This only creates a distraction, as the text moves too slowly to be read naturally. This serves no particular function to the page. If this effect is to be used, entries should be clickable to discover more detail, rather than just creating simple movement.

3 The mailing list is a good idea for the home page, as is the ability to subscribe or be removed from the list. Such mailing lists are a great way to keep potential visitors informed of your activities, but make sure you take advantage of the list by sending out reasonably regular updates via email.

4 The navigation and colours used bear little relation to the dominant site colours. The number of links available can also become confusing to the casual visitor, who may not wish to read through such a long list of links. Keeping things more concise will provide a better overview and offer related information.

5 The content is contained throughout the site within this main area, using a curious blend of red and blue text. The content gravity is confusing, with copy being left or centre-aligned, which doesn't do anything for the presentation nor the way in which the content reads.

6 There is no definitive branding for the band. Wherever the Submerse identity is visible, it takes on a different appearance each time. If text is to be laid vertically, it may be best to align the individual characters to the central point. This needs to be stronger and more identifiable.

1 The site title and (seemingly) unrelated domain name are established at the head of the page to provide a stronger identity to the site. The domain name colour is muted so as not to detract from the main Submerse title, although the same font face and size are used to maintain the identity.

2 The primary navigation has been reduced to a more digestible collection of entries. The 'music' entry is highlighted to imply the rollover state for the graphic. Secondary navigation elements in the contact and links pages have been relegated to the foot of the page.

3 There is little graphical content to be taken from the original site, although we've positioned the individual graphics beneath the header area toward the left, to increase the identity and provide faces for the band. This creates a natural gutter into which the mailing list form fits nicely.

4 The main text within the home page is more informative and has a more prominent position within the centre of the page. The scrolling inline frame allows for as much content as is necessary, while the typography has been standardised to make each entry more identifiable.

5 The right-hand column can be used to draw attention to prominent detail such as the release of the latest CD. A brief description is all that's needed to complement the image, as is a link through to more information – although the CD image also acts as a link.

6 The site branding and band's identity is further supported by a bold instance at the foot of the page. Muting the colour in such a way ensures it remains a background element and doesn't take over the page design. Section headers could be incorporated into this area for subsequent pages.

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ON TEST

OUR RATING SYSTEM

Every product we review on the following pages is rigorously tested by an experienced industry journalist. This means that our reviews are unbiased and impartial. Many magazines throw ratings at you with no explanation of what they mean, but our tests are different. Every rating you see is presented alongside a brief description of why we've chosen to award this score. This way, we hope we can give you a fuller picture of the program or hardware in question. Here's how our verdict system works:

Features

Does the product have enough functionality to make it worthwhile? Has the manufacturer thrown in features to blind you with science? We explain here.

Ease of use

Here, you'll discover if a product can be picked up and used straight out of the box easily. It's not all about being beginner-friendly, though, and we're looking for intuitiveness and an easy path to impressive results.

Quality of results

A product may be easy to operate, but does it provide you with the results you want to achieve? This category often tells you most about a product, as results are what ultimately determines its success or not.

Value for money

Does the product's feature range merit its price tag? Are you paying over the odds for a one-trick pony, or will the product prove a valuable addition to your toolkit?

Final score

Every product we review is given a final percentage as a summary of its overall performance. Look for scores about 85% for a top class piece of software or hardware.

Products which receive 90% or more are given the coveted *Practical Internet Web Designer* award. Only the most outstanding products are awarded a score in the nineties, and this rating marks that product as 'must-have'.

ON TEST THIS MONTH

Adobe GoLive CS 120
Spruced up with a new look and more features, does this new version have enough to topple Dreamweaver?

Sony Handycam DCR-PC105E 122
Grab yourself a bundle of digital video ready for uploading to the Web with this fanastic DV cam

Adobe Photoshop CS.....124
The industry standard image-editing package boasts a select few changes. We road test the professionals' choice

Photoshop Logic Keyboard 126
We take a look at an ingenious input device which promises to remember all the shortcuts for you

Book reviews 128
Check out which paperback heroes you should be feasting your eyes upon in search of design salvation

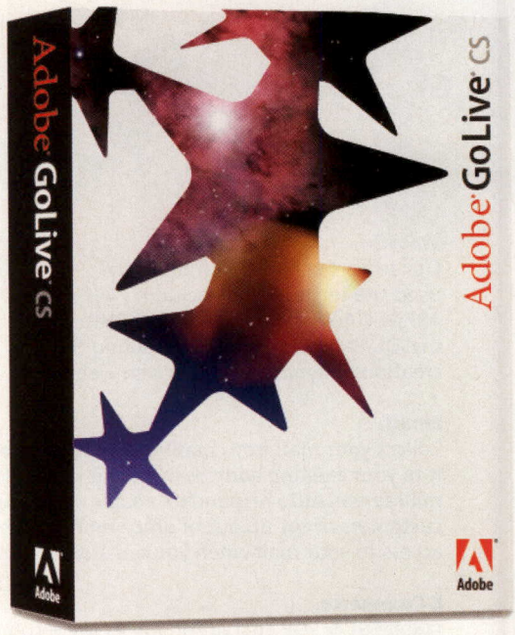
ADOBE GOLIVE CS

ADOBE'S LATEST WEB AUTHORING SUITE HAS NEW FEATURES APLENTY. WILL ITS RIVALS BE QUAKING IN THEIR BOOTS?

There are two kinds of people in this world – those who follow the crowd and those who like to be individuals. People who follow the crowd often get a good deal, as a majority consensus is often right, but they often make their choices with little thought for what's best for them. The saddest part is that if they just decided to try something different, they may be pleasantly surprised.

This analogy unfortunately ties in with the software market, and particularly the category which Adobe's new GoLive CS falls into. For some time, this authoring suite has built up a respectable and dedicated following both inside and outside the industry, but it has always faced a difficult hurdle. In fact, this is true for nearly all Web-development packages. There's little doubt that Macromedia's Dreamweaver MX is considered the Holy Grail for all things HTML, while the others jostle for its crown.

What perhaps gives Adobe an edge though, excluding its sheer size and reputation, is a heritage of quality design products within digital and printed media. It also holds considerable cards in file portability, since Acrobat's PDF format has become a household name. It's in these areas that the publisher hopes to persuade developers that GoLive CS can seriously impress.



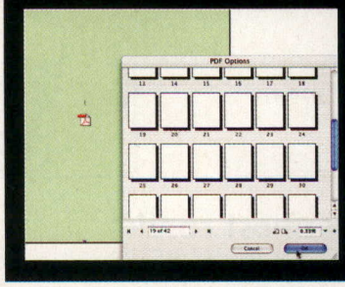
SPECIFICATIONS

Product:	Adobe GoLive CS
URLs:	www.adobe.co.uk
System requirements:	PC
	Intel Pentium 3 or 4 Processor
	Windows 2000 (SP3) or XP
	128Mb RAM
	200Mb Disk space
System requirements:	MAC
	PowerPC G3, 4, 4 dual, 5 dual processor
	Mac OS X
	128Mb RAM
	200Mb Disk space

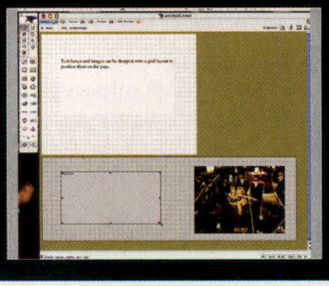
As part of its new Creative Suite of products, GoLive CS could as easily be viewed within a bigger picture as it could on its own. Adobe has tried to unify many of its technologies in recent times and this product is no exception. Its list of significant new features is headed by the inclusion of handy 'Smart Objects' or Adobe-specific plug-ins. This of course means that those working with the larger family of products can swiftly import Photoshop, Illustrator and PDF files into the environment. After using it, you'll find that opening and editing these elements internally is an important feature for improving workflow.

The interface keeps things fairly low-key, and although its general setup has much in common with its Macromedia counterpart, it does remain

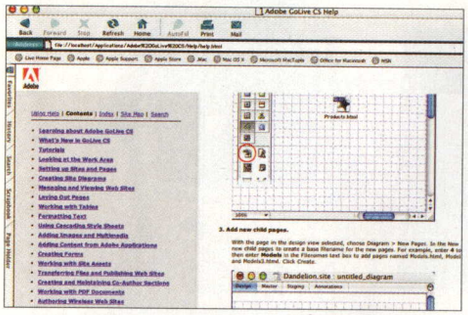
IN DETAIL: GOING LIVE WITH GOLIVE



The provision of 'Smart Objects' makes importing all manner of Adobe files into your pages easy. A PDF control sets up a link to a document and then lets you preview before embedding.



Where GoLive really comes into its own is on the issue of page layout. Grid controls can be added to quickly position other objects wherever desired, eliminating the need for tables.



■ The online help pages should enable developers of all levels to get to grips with GoLive's many new and existing features

refreshingly accessible. There are a number of floating panels, one of which holds a large selection of page tools, while another takes care of properties and tag styles. An excellent but often overlooked touch is that each of these components can be customised. Your most common tools and buttons can be swapped about into configurations that improve performance. Also, the way Adobe has managed to package various layout views, code windows and page previews into the main workspace is commendable.

On the editing front, all the standard page elements are available to you such as tables, layers and images, while embeddable controls are also well represented. There's certainly nothing lacking that Dreamweaver could provide, and in fact on the issue of layout, GoLive could possibly even be better. A unique grid control can be spread across a new page to give a lattice guide for inserting other objects, including textboxes. This really helps to speed up the addition of content and is a welcome alternative to the fiddly practice of manually drawing tables.

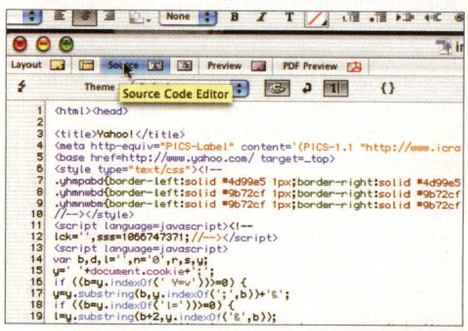
■ One of the package's most thoughtful aspects is the ability to download published sites or pages from a remote server

"WHAT GIVES ADOBE THE EDGE, EXCLUDING ITS SHEER SIZE AND REPUTATION, IS A HERITAGE OF QUALITY DESIGN PRODUCTS WITHIN DIGITAL AND PRINTED MEDIA"

Stylish style sheets

If CSS is your bag, defining and setting tag styles is also improved by a dedicated editor. What's nice is that element classes can be added in a hierarchical list with their class properties instantly selectable for tweaking. You also get to see what the effects have on some sample page objects, although because the editor sits above your work space, it can obscure your view slightly.

As well as a healthy 58 professionally produced templates, ideal for image galleries and eCommerce sites, the suite also has a very handy Import utility. Those who perhaps want to work from a published design can download pages via FTP or HTTP with the greatest of ease. Without implying that anyone should plagiarise commercial domains, it's a nice option to be able to see how the pros do things and use their efforts as inspiration. ■



■ In a similar way to Dreamweaver, the main workspace can be quickly toggled between Design and Code windows

VERDICT

Product: Adobe GoLive CS
Price [inc VAT]: £393.63
Telephone: 0870 6060325
URL: www.adobe.co.uk

Features
■ With all the tools you might want, GoLive has some unique touches that warrant considerable attention

Ease of use
■ Those familiar with similar programs will find the compact and versatile setup extremely accessible

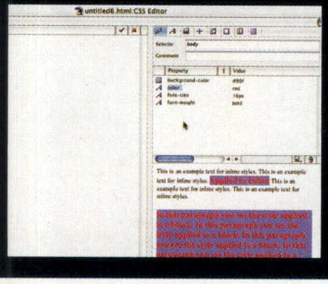
Quality of results
■ The amount of tools and functions on offer ensures that top-quality sites of all kinds are achievable

Value for money
■ A high-end piece of software like this will always be pricey, but a suite this powerful means good value

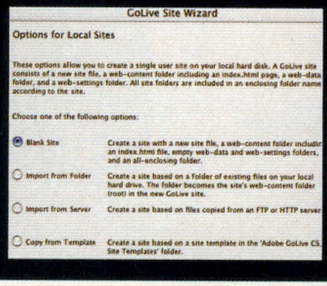
SUMMARY

■ With visual Web-authoring suites following strict trends, most of what GoLive does isn't groundbreaking, but its most prominent features really excel. Certainly the introduction of 'Smart Objects' and its intuitive layout methods could persuade developers to broaden their horizons.

FINAL SCORE: 87%



■ A CSS editor lets you visually add classes and define style properties, with a preview area instantly showing how the changes will be implemented on your page.



■ When you come to start a new site, you have a number of options. The integrated wizard will let you start from scratch or download an existing site from a given server.

SONY DIGITAL HANDYCAM DCR-PC105E

SYNONYMOUS WITH ITS SUPERB TRINITRON TVS AND A CERTAIN BLACK GAMES CONSOLE, SONY IS ALSO A HEAVYWEIGHT IN DIGITAL IMAGING. WE EXAMINE ONE OF ITS LATEST HANDYCAMS TO FIND OUT MORE

We live in an age where just about everybody wants to be on TV. So-called 'reality' shows like Big Brother, Pop Idol and Fame Academy are joined by docusoaps that can herald celebrity status for their eager subjects. And you only have to witness window shoppers bobbing and weaving in front of high-street electrical stores to appreciate our shared fascination with seeing ourselves on screen.

However, now that professional-grade equipment has become affordable to the masses, just about anyone has the ability to leave their mark on the cathode ray tube. Home movies and snaps of family occasions can all be captured for video or DVD, while steaming AV broadcasts across the Web is equally popular.

Sony's range of Handycams has been at the heart of this revolution for some time and has burst into the digital realm. One of its newest models is the DCR-PC105E that boasts all the features you might expect, plus a 120x digital zoom, memory stick support and Mega Pixel technology. This translates into a whopping 690,000 moving image resolution which should ensure that buyers in the upper end of the consumer market aren't disappointed.

SPECIFICATIONS

Product:	Sony Digital Handycam DCR-PC105E
Web address:	www.sony.co.uk
Effective pixels:	1,000,000 (still)
Recording format:	Mini DV and Flash Memory Stick
Digital zoom:	120x
Lens data:	10x, 33m, f/1.8-2.0
Connections:	USB, AV
Memory card:	8Mb
Video compression:	PAL, MPEG
Dimensions:	51 x 104 x 97mm
Weight:	550g

Head turner

Fairly typically, the immediate enthusiasm that all but the most ardent camera connoisseur will experience is for the unit's design. The wonderment of just how manufacturers are producing products of this scale never seems to fade, and this Sony offering is almost reminiscent of the company's old Walkmans. In terms of shape, the contours are not wholly smooth, which can make handling the camera quite awkward. The most noticeable bulge is the supplied 80-100 minute battery pack that clasps to the side, and with the still weighty 550g mass this could cause a tumble. Otherwise, the indigo and metallic look is extremely smart, with the flat lens, extendible viewfinder, fold-out screen and card slot all cleverly tucked away. What isn't so good is that bugbear of most users, ie a bottom-loading tape drive, which will cause major hassle for tripod deployment.

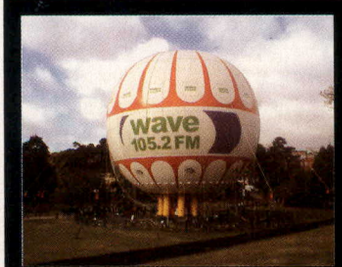
When you get started you'll notice the lack of external buttons, with a lockable thumbwheel providing access to main modes. A Quick Start guide makes life easier and things become literally much clearer once the 2.5" LCD screen is exposed. The camera's range of features for both recording and playback all reside on a surprisingly responsive touch interface. This seems a clever way to economise on extra buttons, but does make the power-hungry monitor or supplied remote control more necessary than normal. However, both the traditional viewfinder and screen provide the kind of excellent output you anticipate, while an LCD backlight switch is invaluable for outdoor use. You can also peruse or organise memory card stills via thumbnails and shuffle through MPEGs with a few taps of your fingertips.

Movie star

The important thing however, is the imaging performance the camera delivers, and thankfully the Sony is no slouch. Its 33mm Carl Zeiss lens draws in a picture that more than lives up to equivalent devices of the class both indoors and out. Colour balance and general crispness of detail and texture particularly shine, but the zoom deserves most credit. Operated by a convenient push switch on the camera's side, it provides great control with minimal blur. Any slight loss of focus can be altered with a dedicated button, and levels of white balance can similarly be tweaked. A quick switch Night mode and flash control allows for great results in the darkest of settings, while a selection of specific application modes also excel. Most notably, a Sports setting minimises shaking, while the Portrait, Sunsetmoon and Landscape varieties optimise shooting under numerous conditions.

On the audio front there can be little to complain about, with the variable microphone picking up most activity – and the optional headphone jack is a godsend for better monitoring.

IN DETAIL: WHAT THE HANDYCAM DCR-PC105E CAN DO



The various modes for different kinds of applications give you the chance to shoot all manner of scenes. In natural light you'll find the clarity and accurate rendition of both colour and detail is mighty impressive.

One of the most notable features is the camera's easily activated and considerably ranged zoom. It allows extremely smooth operation with minimal blur or loss of focus – extremely useful when shooting video.

When using the camera indoors, you'll naturally get a more subdued picture with default settings. However, some tinkering of parameters like white balance and the application of flash will help to gain great results.

Finding your way around the Handycam

Explore the camera's compact contours and uncover a wealth of features with our guide

Audio speakers
Sound output is provided by a top mounted stereo speaker set that can be adjusted on screen. A headphone jack has also been provided to make monitoring more intimate

Lens
The camera's Carl Zeiss lens has a zoom of up to 120x. Not only is it conveniently situated, but manages to capture a range of images that are both clear and incredibly natural

Connections
A small front panel uncovers to reveal plugs for attaching the charging unit, along with the supplied USB cable for compute use

LCD monitor
The adequately sized Preview screen flips out from the body and rotates for taking self-portraits. It also features excellent touch technology for accessing interface functions and menus

Battery pack
The limpet-like battery cell clips on to the side of the unit and should facilitate the rapid changing of multiple power packs in no time at all

"THE SIMPLISTIC OPERATION CAN BE ATTRIBUTED TO A SCALED-DOWN BUILD THAT ALSO BLENDS GREAT LOOKS WITH EXCELLENT PORTABILITY"

If this wasn't already enough, the standard capture of rich video and stills can be further enhanced with an exciting array of filters. These include Negative, Sepia, Pastel and Mosaic variations that could be just the thing for arty or more moody work. What's more, preset special effects like the black-banded Old Movie, dramatic Slow Shutter and nauseating Trail will delight domestic directors. You also get scene titling and the ability to record and superimpose external TV and video, which will yield all sorts of possibilities for multimedia presentations. Fortunately this includes the Web, and all the necessary iLink or USB connectors arrive with software for rapid PC and Mac integration. Here you can install the ImageMixer and transfer utilities that will let you organise or edit your images and preview live video.

In conclusion, this latest Handycam is a perfect example of forward thinking design and innovation. The simplistic operation can be attributed to a scaled-down build that also blends great looks with excellent portability. General imaging abilities are terrific, while the extra effects and editing features help to soften any niggles. ■

■ The software includes an 'ImageMixer' suite that you can use to view video and memory card stills. All images can be organised using the integrated File Manager, where files can be shuffled between folders or removed.

■ With the camera connected to your computer and the USB Streaming option selected, you can begin viewing video. Here you can record live footage via the desktop, or alternatively watch back your tapes.

VERDICT

Product: Sony Digital Handycam DCR-PC105E
Price [inc VAT]: £949.99
Telephone: 08705 111999
URL: www.sony.co.uk

Features
■ The stunning special effects and facilities for editing footage make this cam great for multimedia work

Ease of use
■ A considerate design and economical build make for a straightforward experience that will entice all users

Quality of results
■ With well-defined, sharp stills and video under many conditions, its performance must rank high

Value for money
■ The price tag may be too steep for casual buyers, but the package promises quality for the money.

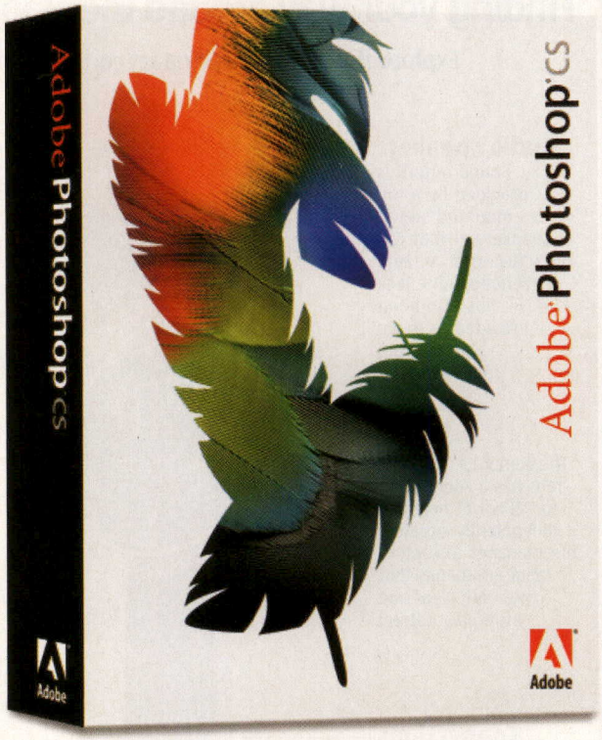
SUMMARY

■ This stylish, compact camera exhibits a design that's not only simple to use but very powerful. Both beginners and experts will be pleased by the amount of features and innovations. A great-looking touch screen, raft of editing tools and connectivity options make minor blips forgivable.

FINAL SCORE: 86%

ADOBE PHOTOSHOP CS

THE BIGGEST GRAPHICS PACKAGE OF THEM ALL HAS HAD A REVAMP. WE CHECK OUT THE RESULTS, AND SEE HOW MUCH OF AN IMPROVEMENT THE CHANGES MAKE TO ADOBE'S POPULAR IMAGE EDITOR



The launch of a new Adobe program is always big news in the world of Web design, so the revamp of a range of packages and a whole new bundle is a major event in the calendar. Creative Suite has caused an almighty furore since it was announced last month, and the clamour for copies of the new software has reached unheard of levels in the press corps.

The suite itself is huge, with a price tag to match, but interest in the components within rests mainly on a new version of Photoshop. It's been around for so long now, and become a trusted partner in creativity for so many, that it's often difficult to fathom ways in which Adobe could improve on the Photoshop experience. There are Improvements, but you're unlikely to find anything that will rock your world. Photoshop CS doesn't so much mark a radical overhaul as a subtle tweak of the interface for improved performance.

Hello, good evening and welcome

On opening the program for the first time, you'll chance upon one of the helpful additions to the program. Following from a similar inclusion to the second edition of Photoshop Elements, Photoshop CS now contains a Welcome screen, enabling you to access frequently-used files and functions. As you'd expect from a powerhouse like Photoshop, this beginner-friendly tool also has enough in the way of customisation to make it extremely useful for advanced users as well.

Once you're into the interface proper, it's pretty much as you were, with much of the added functionality hidden away in menus and tool options. Fans of the file browser from Photoshop 7 who felt that it was sorely underused will be happy to see that it has a much more prominent position within the Photoshop CS canon. As well as being taken out of the palette to reside in its own window, the enhanced file browser now also contains more information about any of the files you find on your hard drive than you'll know what to do with. The result of this is that it's much easier to find files on your hard drive, and to use them more effectively to boot.

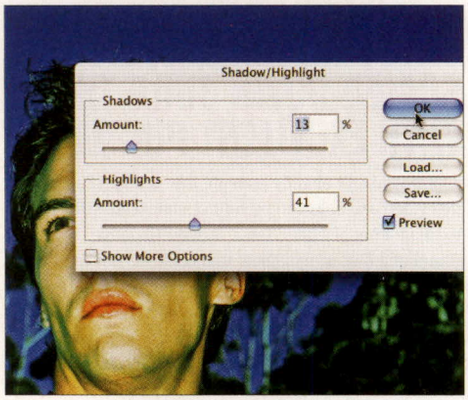
SPECIFICATIONS

Product:	Adobe Photoshop CS
Operating Systems:	PC, OS X
System requirements:	PC Intel Pentium III or 4 processor. Windows 2000 or Windows XP. 192Mb RAM (256Mb recommended). 280Mb available disk space. 1,024x768 or above resolution.
System requirements:	Mac PowerPC G3, G4 or G5 processor. Mac OS X 10.2.4 or above. 192Mb RAM (256Mb recommended). 320Mb available disk space. 1,024x768 or above resolution.

It's only layer

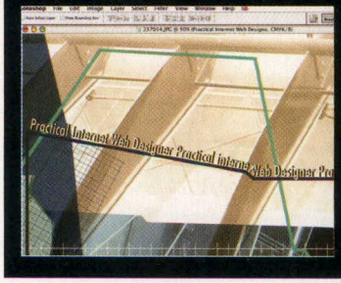
Key to the myriad of adjustments in Photoshop CS is the inclusion of 'layer comps', a tool that should prove a major boon to Photoshop professionals around the globe. Essentially, it allows you to configure different versions of the same image, and store them all within the same file. It takes a bit of getting used to, but designers should be salivating at the prospect of using this feature. Just think – next time your client asks to see five or six different versions of the same image, you won't have to spend ages saving it out half a dozen times using different settings. Instead, you can now set the original image up, then tinker with it under different layer comps to create 'versions' much more easily than before.

Another tool that Adobe is rightly trumpeting from high on the rooftops is the Text to Path function. Non-Photoshop users will be stunned that

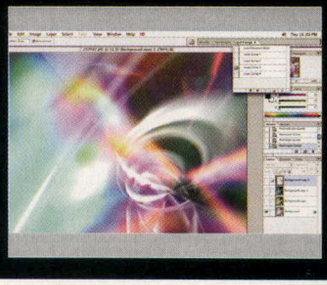


The new Photoshop CS lets you tinker with a variety of photo-specific options to bring out the best in your digital images

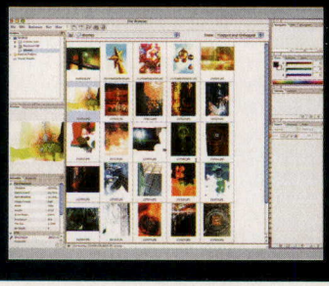
IN DETAIL: SOME OF THE NEW FEATURES IN PHOTOSHOP CS



At long last, there's finally an option in Photoshop that enables you to run text along a user-defined path. It couldn't be easier as well, so you can achieve Illustrator-like effects in no time at all.



Professional designers will rejoice at the inclusion of the 'layer comps' feature, allowing you to create different versions of the same image within the same file – something that's ideal for sending proofs to a client.



With a thorough revamp, the file browser now offers much more in the way of file information, letting you see exactly what's going on before you double-click to open an image.

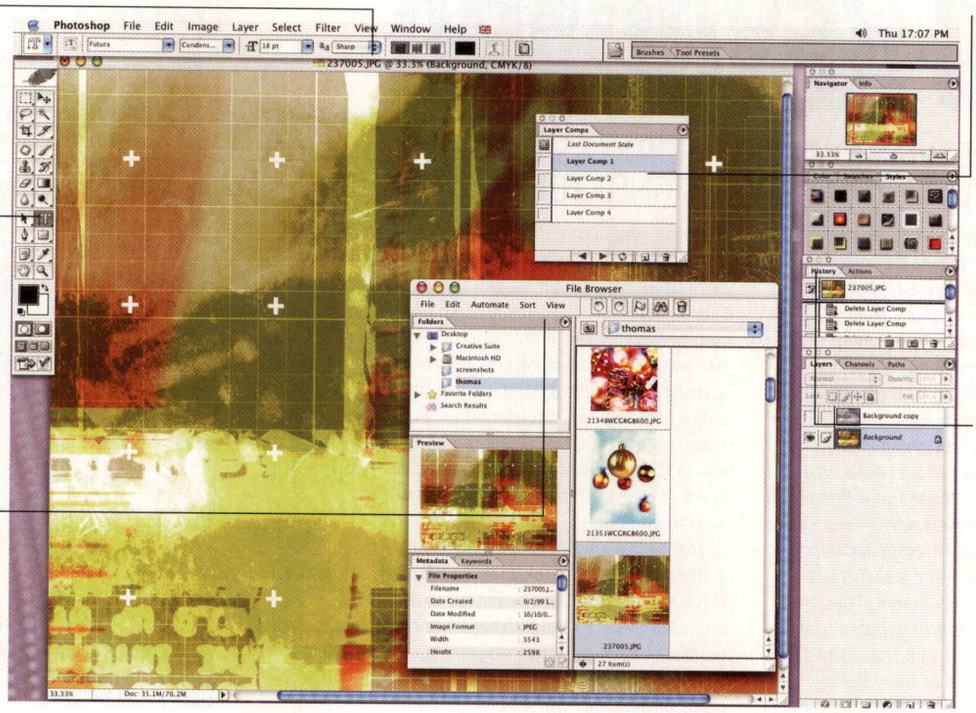
Photoshop CS in detail

You've seen the Photoshop interface many times before, but how does the new CS compare? Take a look...

Tool presets
Tweak each and every function of Photoshop to open with your default settings with the help of this toolbar add-on

Text options
Photoshop CS now contains more text functionality than before, including the ability to wrap text around paths

Enhanced file browser
As you can see, the file browser now resides in its own window, and contains many more features than before



Layer comps
Create entirely different versions of the same image, then store them within the same file, using this ingenious new feature of Photoshop CS

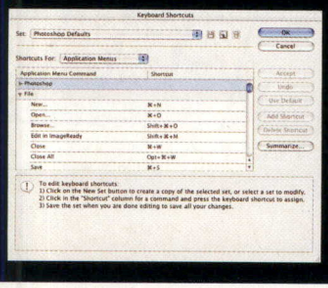
History palette
This is a great example of Photoshop CS's power. The History palette looks the same as in Photoshop 7, but it contains a number of under-the-bonnet fixes to make it more powerful

"IF YOU HAVE PHOTOSHOP 7 ALREADY, YOU MIGHT NOT FEEL AN URGENT NEED TO RUSH OUT AND SPEND YOUR HARD-EARNED, BUT YOU'LL STILL FEEL THE BENEFIT IN THE LONG RUN"

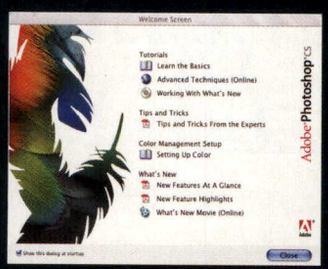
the most popular image-editing package in the world has never before allowed you to run text along a user-determined path, but it's previously been left solely to Illustrator, Photoshop's vector-based sibling. The tool is a doddle to use – create your path, then select the Text tool and start typing. Sure, you'll find more functionality in vector packages, but you can garner excellent results in next to no time. Adobe has always been keen to keep Photoshop and Illustrator apart, so it might come as a surprise to see such a feature crop up in Photoshop, but this is a nice additional touch to allow designers that extra functionality.

More, more, more

As we said before, CS hardly represents a change of identity for Photoshop. There are a myriad of tiny tweaks and alterations to the interface that should make your digital imaging masterpieces that bit easier to achieve. If you have Photoshop 7 already, you might not feel an urgent need to rush out and spend your hard-earned, but you'll still feel the benefit in the long run. ■



■ Keyboard shortcuts have always been a big draw for Photoshop users, and this latest edition contains options to tinker with existing keypresses, and even create some more of your own.



■ In keeping with most software released these days, Photoshop CS now contains a Welcome screen that features options and links to your most commonly-used functions and files.

VERDICT

Product: Adobe Photoshop CS
Price [inc VAT]: £605.13
Email: english-custserv@adobe.com
URL: www.adobe.co.uk

Features
■ Still the best toolset of any image-editor, but it hasn't changed that much since the last version

Ease of use
■ The most beginner-friendly Photoshop ever, with Advanced functions also tweaked for ease of use

Quality of results
■ It's Photoshop, so you can expect the best results of any graphics editor on the market, bar none

Value for money
■ It's not cheap, but only design professionals or serious hobbyists need apply anyway

SUMMARY

■ The new version of Photoshop might be styled differently, but the feature set remains similar to version 7. Dedicated users might feel aggrieved that not enough has been changed, but CS improves yet further on the best toolset on the market, even if only slightly.

FINAL SCORE: 88%

PHOTOSHOP LOGIC KEYBOARD

BECOME THE WIZARD OF THE SHORTCUTS WITH THIS STRIKING NEW KEYBOARD, SPECIALLY DESIGNED FOR PHOTOSHOP

One of the most annoyingly frustrating things in the world has to be watching someone who's skilfully adept with a keyboard. For those who don't share their incredible dexterity, the initial wonderment of witnessing their lightning-quick key pressing quickly diminishes under the air of their smugness.

Call it a chip on the shoulder, but this reviewer, despite perhaps many years as a computer user, has always found something spooky about typists who don't need to look at the keys. There's something even more bewildering about those users who seem to know every available shortcut for almost every application.

However, if you've ever wanted a fast-track method for reaching such heady heights, this type of product could be for you. Logic Keyboard's latest offering is a Photoshop-specific unit that comes fully equipped with all manner of time-saving tricks. What's so clever about this is that the digital design or arts context it falls into is an area where bringing more power to the fingertips is vital. What's more, it will still function as a regular keyboard outside of Photoshop, so flicking between programs is no bother.

Colourful character

When you first see the keyboard you are instantly drawn to its bustling array of coloured buttons. With the remaining space given nothing more than a black (or white) finish, the rows of brightly decorated numeric and alpha keys leap out at you. Each is assigned its corresponding Photoshop commands that are either signified by phrases like 'Shape' and 'Slice', or nicely, appropriate icons. In actual fact, the extra labelling can be quite overwhelming and a consequence is a keyspace that appears rather busy. More generally,you could say that the keyboard has a novelty factor in that it looks reminiscent of those from early BBC or Sinclair computers.

The device connects up really easily though, with a standard PS2 plug the method of choice. No extra software or drivers are required, with the keyboard intended to be a straightforward and possibly permanent swap. In this respect, you'd imagine that whoever feels compelled to buy such a niche piece of hardware would also be happiest leaving it hooked up.

Key features

You need to do nothing more than start up Photoshop and work as normal. Beginners will no doubt appreciate that all the program's key triggers are so clearly mapped out. You understand the value when using cursor commands such as 'Lasso' or 'Crop', where one hand can toggle between tools while the other does the applying. The benefits of coupling this with a drawing tablet are obvious, and the freedom in not needing to navigate the interface is great.

Some of the most useful functions can be attributed to those fiddly things such as image zooming or the setting of brush sizes, which most users frequently need. The effortless switching of pens, fills and dodge effects cannot be ignored, while a whole row of opacity controls for setting depth percentages is a nice touch.

On the whole, this is a product that performs very much as expected, but there are certain misgivings. In the hands of experienced Photoshop users, who are presumably the most likely buyers, the keyboard may seem slightly odd. Their hard-learned knowledge is undermined to a degree and could perhaps leave them questioning its purpose. You could also question why a simple keyboard cover couldn't achieve the same thing, as its usefulness says more about Photoshop than the device itself.

An additional question mark would also hang over its compatibility with varying versions of the software – previous or future. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

Product:	Photoshop Logic Keyboard
Web address:	www.logickeyboard.com
Connections:	PS2
Dimensions:	465 x 160 x 35mm
Weight:	1.3Kg

VERDICT

Product: Photoshop Logic Keyboard
Price [inc VAT]: £69.80
Telephone: 01438 315757
URL: www.logickeyboard.com

Features ■■■□□
■ It's a bit of a one-trick pony, but this niche product has plenty of potential for Photoshop fans

Ease of use ■■■■□
■ Usability is the key here, and the device excels with simple setup and a fundamentally intuitive design

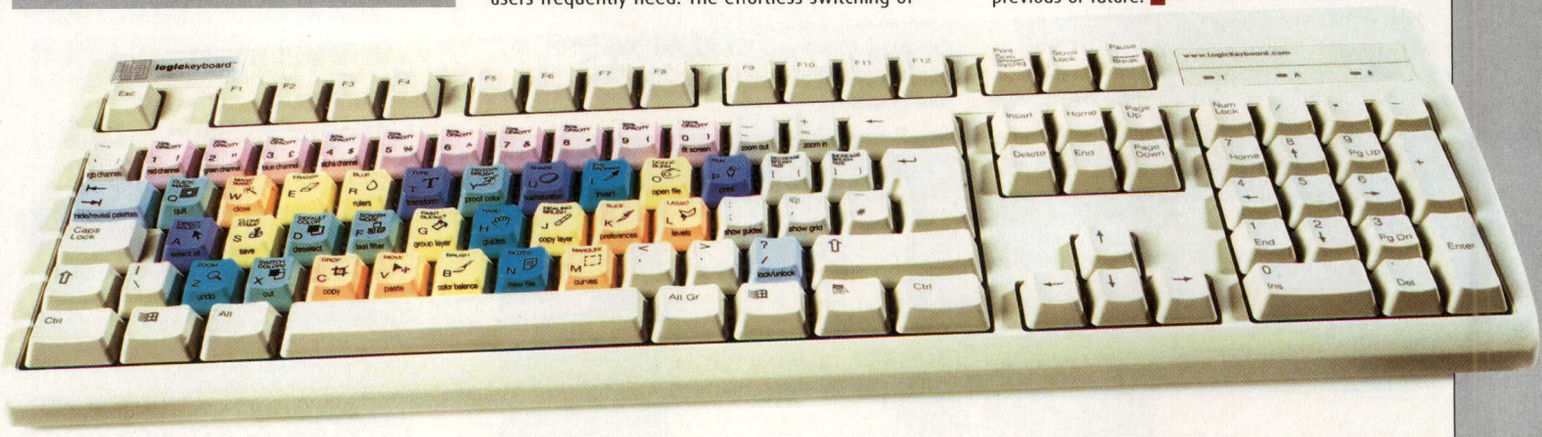
Quality of results ■■■■□
■ What you rustle up in Photoshop is down to you, but the keyboard cannot fail to produce the goods

Value for money ■■■■□
■ Many people will resent the idea of spending money on a whole new keyboard for such a limited application

SUMMARY

■ This product does what it sets out to do very well, and peripherals that raise accessibility like this should be applauded. Beginners, if motivated enough to use or buy one, will find their Photoshop experience enhanced. However, the more advanced user may find that good old know-how is enough.

FINAL SCORE: 81%



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BOOK REVIEWS

THIS MONTH'S WEB DESIGN TOMES TAKE IN DREAMWEAVER, FLASH AND PHOTOSHOP. LET YOUR FINGERS DO THE WALKING TO DISCOVER WHAT YOU SHOULD BE READING

DREAMWEAVER MX COMPLETE COURSE

The 'complete course' shout in this book's title could be hard to live up to, but Joyce J. Evans' publication contains over 80 step-by-step tutorials on getting the most from Macromedia's much-loved WYSIWYG software. It's a fairly linear experience, starting you off with explanations of the interface and how to customise it to best fit your needs, through to some advanced coding tips on validating forms and building update pages. Unlike many of its rivals, Complete Course utilises the kind of step-by-step method found in this magazine, which makes learning that little bit easier. Full colour throughout, *Complete Course* puts the emphasis on practical learning, with some quizzes at the end of each chapter to make sure you've picked up the instructions well. Although some of the sites created here aren't quite as aspirational and aesthetically impressive as you'll find elsewhere, you're guaranteed to learn something from every page in the book – by the time you've finished, you should know your way around Dreamweaver enough to create impressive sites of your own. ■

VERDICT

Author: Joyce J. Evans
Price: £34.95
ISBN: 0-7645-3686-9
Publisher: Seybold
URL: www.seyboldseminars.com

SUMMARY

■ A good book for beginners, *Complete Course* takes you through the basics of Dreamweaver through to fairly advanced topics. It's very practical as well, so you should learn a lot.

FINAL SCORE: 82%

PHOTOSHOP 7 BIBLE: PROFESSIONAL EDITION

Anyone who's ever considered purchasing a Photoshop book must have pondered the *Bible* series of books written by Deke McLelland. As the name implies, these are fantastically comprehensive books, packed to the hilt with hundreds of pages of top-class information and advice. So what's different about the Professional edition, then? Well, it's got a hardback cover, with a foxy chick on the cover imploring you to buy it. It's not all superficial, though, and this edition contains a wealth of previously unseen tips. From the name, you should be able to tell that this book is aimed at the more serious Photoshop user, so you start off fairly complex and gradually take in more and more high-end features of the program, including drawing in Photoshop and outputting images for the Web and for print. As with all of McLelland's books, though, all of the images used and created are somehow more entertaining than you'd find in other publications – which makes you all the more eager to try out his advice. ■

VERDICT

Author: Deke McLelland
Price: £44.50
ISBN: 0-7645-1993-X
Publisher: Wiley
URL: www.wiley.com

SUMMARY

■ It says 'bible' in the title, and this is a comprehensive collection of tips, tricks and tutorials. McLelland's books have long been at the forefront of Photoshop advice, and this tome is unlikely to lessen his grip on that mantle.

FINAL SCORE: 90%

FLASH MX MOST WANTED

Some books attempt to give you a full grounding on a given subject, while others are happy to provide you with an array of nifty tricks and cool effects. *Flash MX Most Wanted* definitely falls into the latter category, and assumes that you know your way around a Flash interface already. The effects here are presented in the order they might appear on your site, so you start off with preloaders and move up through various animation tools. It's not amazingly cohesive (it's written by many authors), but the effects presented here are much better than you'll find in most books. From MP3 jukeboxes through to interactive drawing, this is the book for anyone wanting to extend their Flash capabilities – and *Practical Internet Web Designer*'s Todd Yard puts in an appearance as well. Just in case you were unsure of the heritage of the experts in question, the Friends of Ed people have only managed to persuade someone from Disney to show you how to draw animated characters. All in all, very impressive. ■

VERDICT

Author: Shem Bhangal et al
Price: $39.99 (around £24)
ISBN: 1-903450-94-2
Publisher: Friends Of Ed
URL: www.friendsofed.com

SUMMARY

■ Don't expect to learn everything about Flash here – instead you're treated to a myriad of amazing tricks that'll make you the envy of your Web design contemporaries.

FINAL SCORE: 91%

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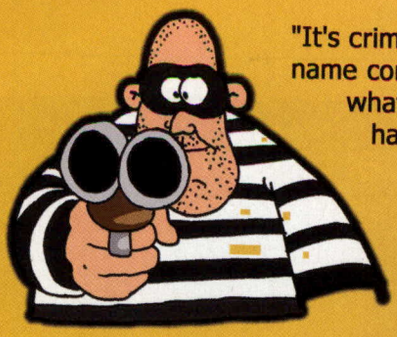

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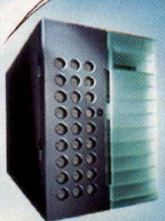

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About the CD

Every issue, we scour the Net for the best programs and resources. Here's how your free CD shapes up this month...

Main navigation
Access the main sections of the CD from here

Section title
Each program has its own section for you to browse

Section navigation
Click on the links to move through each section

Content links
Here you'll find links to the files on the CD

How it works

Our aim with every issue's cover disc is to create the perfect complement to the issue itself. This means that navigating the CD should be as easy as reading the magazine, with each section designed to mimic a key area. While many CDs throw huge lists of software at you and expect you to find the programs you're interested in yourself, our CD is different. If you want a Dreamweaver extension, therefore, you'll find it in the Dreamweaver section – which also contains the software itself, as well as a host of other Dreamweaver-related utilities. Each section also contains tutorial files to help you better follow the walkthroughs on each of the key programs. Again, you'll find these essential files stored under each main program heading.

The reason for choosing this method of navigation is a simple one – we want to make your disc as intuitive and straightforward as possible. We hope you find the contents of the disc useful for developing your knowledge – that is the point after all!

The *Practical Internet Web Designer* CD is both PC and Mac friendly. We appreciate how many of you Flash users, for example, create your animations on an Apple machine, so we've tried to assemble a list of software as impressive as the PC section of the disc. What's more, for the first time ever, Mac users can navigate the disc through the same interface as the one on the PC side, making things much more intuitive.

WINDOWS MAC X

ON THE DISC

Look for the logo

This logo appears on many of the tutorials to tell you that the files you need to follow the walkthrough appear on your disc. You'll also find a handy guide to finding the files.

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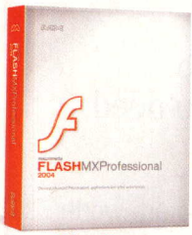
FLASH MX 2004



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To help you along the way, our many monthly Flash MX tutorials are designed to inform as well as inspire creative ideas. This time we focus on the production of an OS-style interface and all the fundamental skills it involves, and also show you how to create a cool preloader. If that's not enough, those looking to extend their knowledge even further should check out our video streaming exercise. Here you'll see how embedding digital footage into your presentations can unlock even more from this essential piece of software.

DREAMWEAVER MX 2004

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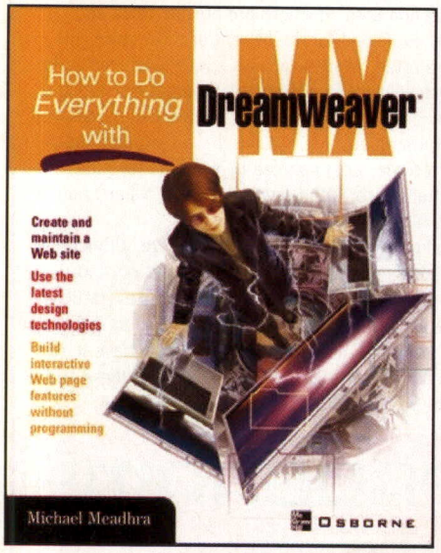
Price: £339
Upgrade Price: £169

To put what Macromedia's Dreamweaver represents to Web design into context would be akin to describing what Rolls Royce means to cars. Frankly, this all-singing and all-dancing graphical HTML editor is the cream of the crop and has been a mainstay of the Web development industry for some time. Designers should consider knowledge of its wide range of facilities among the most important things on their CV, while amateurs shouldn't fear its intuitive way of working. Coders can still get their hands dirty by sifting through markup, JavaScript and Cascading Styles, while the accessible drag-and-drop interface can be used to alleviate such stresses. A wealth of page elements can be instantly drawn onto pages and manipulated visually, which makes laying out elaborate designs a breeze. Project composers and integrated link checkers also ensure that your site comes together seamlessly, making the publishing process run as smoothly as possible. What's more, our Dreamweaver crash courses for this month will also better your understanding of some of the package's most crucial aspects. First up, the use of templates and CSS come together to provide vital tips for applying great looks across a site. Then possibly one of HTML's most potent objects, the layer, is profiled in a detailed guide to adding behaviours.

THIS ISSUE'S FEATURED SOFTWARE

Every month, we try to bring you the software you need to follow the expert tutorials within the magazine. This issue, you'll find trials of Flash and Dreamweaver. If you hanker for even more advice on the latter, you should check out our free chapter from an acclaimed Dreamweaver book

HOW TO DO EVERYTHING WITH DREAMWEAVER MX



Scared of Dreamweaver's many functions? Worry not, for we have an exclusive PDF chapter to help you out

Possibly the most daunting thing about learning any new skill is the threat of failure. Many people build up their perception of how complicated something might be to a point where they're too scared to try. Ironically, in these situations the most important lesson that gets learnt is that things are never so bad once you have a go. Making mistakes is actually vital to figuring out the correct way, but often that takes too much time and patience.

This is where a bit of knowledgeable help and guidance comes in, and a good book can prove the best way to get it. As it stands, the technical computing market is saturated with these types of expert manuals that cover all sorts of topics. Most provide a superb way for authors who are often leading minds in the industry to share their words of wisdom, be it in digital design, programming or Web development. Few can deny that the ability to carefully consider what you are being instructed to do, until it sinks in, can be really effective when tackling tricky topics.

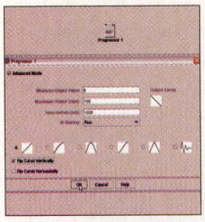
To illustrate this point, we've managed to get hold of a terrific eBook extract from Michael Meadhra's book on Dreamweaver MX. *How to Do Everything With...* does pretty much what it says, promising the reader a detailed tour throughout Macromedia's authoring giant. It begins by examining the package's multi-layered interface by breaking down the environment into chunks and then moving on to starting a first site. All the many HTML techniques get a mention, backed by crystal clear annotated screenshots, before working with links, layout tools, forms and style sheets is explained.

Impressively, the book goes beyond the basics by giving more advanced users information on layers, dynamic scripting and ASP. The PDF chapter you'll find on the CD is among the more advanced and focuses on working with rollovers. You'll also find stacks more about creating other exciting interactive elements, but will more likely improve your comprehension of JavaScript coding. The principles behind events, actions and behaviours are not only talked about but implemented within a number of step-by-step exercises. Here the book excels by demonstrating what you need to do to generate navigation bars and pop-up menus in a way that shouldn't leave you scratching your head.

Full version software

This issue's CD comes packed with two great full programs. It doesn't matter if you want to create incredible interactive 3D animations or fully-featured Web sites, we've got what you need

WIREFUSION 2.1 [Full program worth £59]



Create interactive sites in a trice with WireFusion

It can be both an inspiring and humbling experience when you chance upon a truly great site. Often featuring clever interactive elements and stunningly sublime animations, the best examples can really strike a long-lasting chord with their visitors. The frustrating thing for us mere mortals is achieving these kinds of results without always possessing the technical expertise required. Demicron Software's WireFusion series of acclaimed Web graphics tools is geared exactly toward this market, giving users the chance to create dynamic Java-based content without the need for programming knowledge.

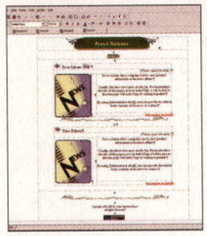
Based within a 100 per cent drag-and-drop visual environment, it facilitates the production of advanced content that can easily be added to your pages as Java Applets. Among its many functions, Version 2.1 comes with the added power of 3D facilities. This makes it possible to apply complex image-processing filters to both 2D graphics and 3D objects in real-time, while the support for the VRML format allows external models to be imported. By combining 2D and 3D elements together the possibilities are limitless, especially given the option of reusing basic animations as modelling textures.

Attaching subsequent actions or behaviours is all handled intuitively by the software's excellent IDE that adopts a distinct diagrammatical approach. What's more, all presentations created in WireFusion enjoy full support from Java-enabled browsers, meaning that no additional plug-ins or updates are necessary. However, its power isn't only confined to the Web, and users should quickly realise what it can do within advertising, e-learning and even gaming applications. We guarantee that if you want a shortcut to giving your site the wow factor without facing the horrors of scripting, WireFusion 2.1 is the answer.

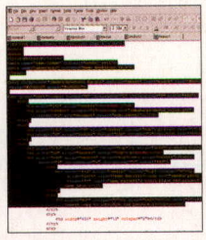
To get the most from WireFusion, you'll have to register the product. Achieving this aim couldn't be simpler – just pop along to **www.demicron.com/practical** and follow the onscreen instructions for details.

If, for whatever reason, you find that you want more from WireFusion, why not install the trial of version 3.2 you'll find on the disc. New features in this latest version include a timeline to make your life easier and a magnification tool which brings up a new page containing the magnified image.

NAMO WEB EDITOR 3 [Full program worth £80]



Building great sites is a doddle with Namo



Get your hands dirty with HTML if you want...

Unless you're looking to make serious money from your own home pages or perhaps work in the Web design industry, authoring tools can be an expensive proposition. We might happily sing the praises of development suites like Dreamweaver MX, Flash MX and GoLive, but their inherent quality could very well be above the average buyer's budget. If that means you, don't despair, because we've managed to secure you a fully-working version of WSKA Edition's quite brilliant Namo WebEditor 3 for absolutely nothing.

This package offers a really straightforward way of working, encapsulated within an interface that's not too dissimilar to the popular HomeSite. Everything you could possibly need is grouped into a single window that uses tabbed work areas to view a Design, Code and Preview mode. In addition, a familiar menu structure gives you quick access to a plethora of common page objects and commands. You'll also be pleased to unearth new support for DHTML, an integrated JavaScript coding wizard and FTP publishing utilities. Creating effective page templates is made even easier by automated facilities, while compatibility with Microsoft's SourceSafe and Unicode or Global IME ensures that everything runs smoothly.

Another piece of good news is that a genuinely helpful online help system will get you working in no time. The interface and basic functions are broken down and carefully explained for the benefit of those users just getting started, which is always a nice touch. Similarly, the more advanced can find great topics on scripting dynamic elements like rollovers, drop-down menus and scrolling marquees. As if all this wasn't enough, the program comes accompanied by some handy little applications such as the screen-grabbing Namo Capture and the nifty Namo GIF animator.

Installing all the components is a breeze, although you will need to register a pair of product keys on startup. Just enter Serial Number 1303-000001 and CD Key 1SLB0M UPZ7G2 81PE0HB R4HZ9E0 where prompted to extend the trial. It's worth noting, however, that you'll have to run the main Namo installer before the others – these add-ons need the main program to function.

HOW TO FIND THE FULL PROGRAMS

To find the full programs on this issue's cover disc, simply click on the Bonus Software button on the main navigation bar. This will take you into the Software section, where you can find all of the full versions, as well as selected trials and demos for you to try

Full CD listing

With two full programs, some excellent trials and more tutorial files than you can shake a stick at, here's your full CD rundown

PC

Software
Dreamweaver MX 2004 (Trial)
Flash MX 2004 (Trial)
Namo Web Editor 3
osCommerce
WireFusion 2.1
WireFusion 3.2 (Trial)

Photoshop plug-ins
hotTEXT 1.5
QuickSpace
Dreamsuite Dreamy Photo
Dreamsuite Mosaic
Harry's Filters
Plug-in Galaxy
Redfield

eBook
How To Do Everything With Dreamweaver MX chapter

Flash components
Flash Guru
Eyeland components

Fonts
100 aenigma fonts

Tutorial files
036-041 Photoshop background
042-044 Web buttons
046-050 Template Web site
052-055 CSS site: part two
056-058 Layer Behaviors
060-066 Flash OS interface
068-070 Flash preloader
072-075 Flash MX 2004 video
076-080 Streaming video
086-087 CMS: part two
088-089 Interactive polls
092-093 ASP upload script
102-107 eCommerce site: part two

MAC

Software
Dreamweaver MX 2004
Flash MX 2004

Photoshop plug-ins
hotTEXT 1.5
3D Dizzy 1
Dreamsuite Dreamy Photo
Dreamsuite Mosaic
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068-070 Flash preloader
072-075 Flash MX 2004 video
076-080 Streaming video
086-087 CMS: part two
088-089 Interactive polls
092-093 ASP upload script

Eyeland Studios

www.eyeland.com

If you're looking to incorporate sophisticated Flash elements into your home pages but without the bother, help is at hand. Updated regularly, the resources available include animated buttons, dynamic menus, tabbed interfaces, page templates and scrolling windows. The 15 you'll find on the CD provide the perfect introduction and feature everything from drop-down menus to a seriously funky digital clock.

Essential resources

AutoFX
www.autofx.com

The people at AutoFX are not only responsible for a neat and well designed product site but, importantly, a great selection of Photoshop plug-ins. All manner of bases are covered within their DreamSuite range, including tools for adding translucent and crystal effects or ethereal lighting styles. Dreamy Photo and Mosaic tools are just two examples that enable you to apply exquisite filters to your images. The first lets you add gentle warm and soft looks, while the other can be used to impressively fracture your graphics into tiles. Both of them will also stand alone as independent applications and should prove a welcome addition to your digital palette.

The Plugin Site
www.thepluginsite.com

Two resources come courtesy of the Plugin Site, although the combined amount of eye-catching effects they offer you could truly be limitless. Both are in fact sizeable toolkits, with Plugin Galaxy containing a whopping 21 plugins and over 150 effects, while Harry's Filters weighs in with a further 55 eye-popping tricks. You'll have everything you need to apply special techniques such as rippled glass or water and even be able to simulate page curling in 3D. You'll also find nice picture framing or buttonise options, ripped edging for fraying images, zooming, crazy warping and a whole lot more. All in all, this could be your one-stop effect shop.

Vertigo3D
www.vertigo3d.com

Another company with a site worth visiting is Vertigo 3D. These purveyors of plug-ins have a terrific selection of Windows and Mac based utilities that are sure to get your creative juices flowing. HotText 1.5 in particular is a great way to insert startling, texture-rich 3D text without the need for working with additional software. QuickSpace is another utility that gives you an incredible range of 3D modelling functions – including texture mapping, lighting and much more. The similar 3D Dizzy variation also provides Mac users with the equivalent functionality, so there's no excuse for everybody not giving them a try.

Redfield Plugins
www.redfieldplugins.com

This package from Redfield Plugins contains a total of seven filters and promises to give Photoshop users an arsenal of exciting effects. With a strong 3D-bias, the most impressive variations include the incredibly realistic Water Ripples and the corrugated simulator, Jama 3D. You can also apply brilliant weave and pattern textures with the Lattice Composer or effectively join multiple images as if they were one with Seamless Workshop. What's more, if you like what you see and are after more, you can take advantage of a generous 20% online discount on further Redfield products by quoting coupon code 541870 when ordering.

Flashguru
www.flashguru.co.uk

Guy Watson is the man behind Flashguru and the site itself certainly lives up to the name. As well as news, tutorials and further links, you'll also find some pretty neat Flash resources. The three extensions we have here are no exception and will allow you to run batch commands on documents with jsfl scripts or set up automated file-saving facilities. Lastly, you'll find a component that makes it a piece of cake to create fully-functioning Web forms. These can be perfect for adding eCommerce or feedback facilities to any site, and this tool makes it achievable, without all the hassle you'd expect when starting from scratch.

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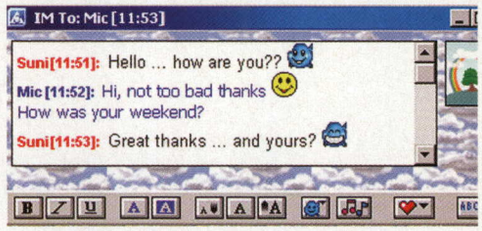

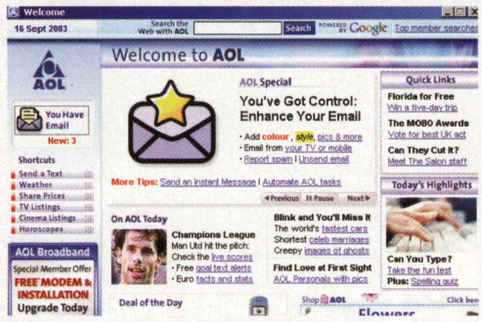

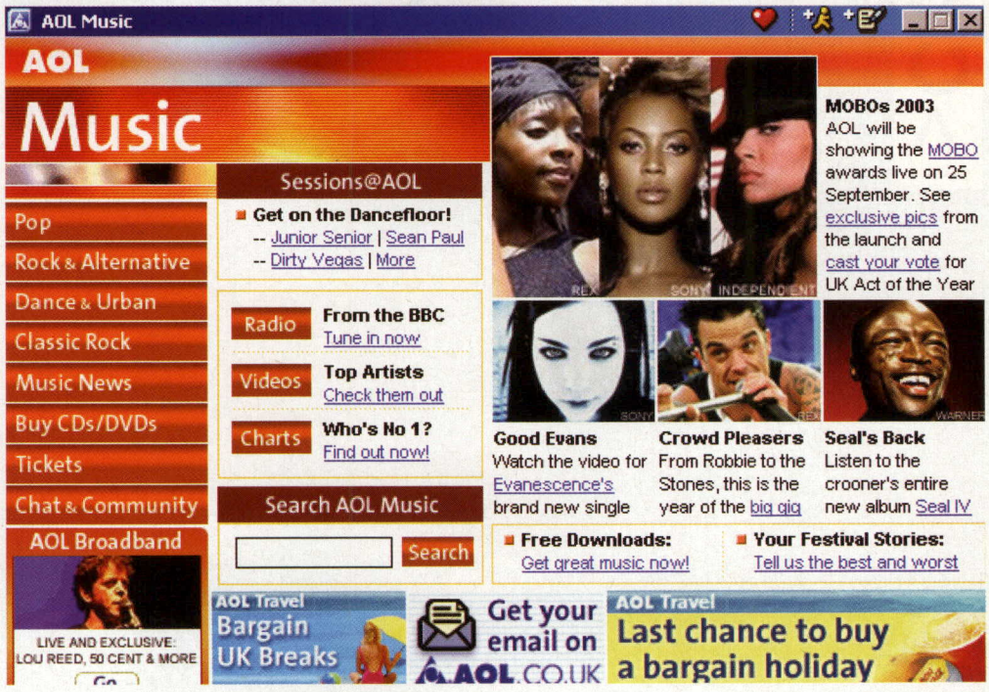

>Close

Image: Dymo
Creator: Joost Korngold
URL: www.renascent.nl

As well as being an expert in Photoshop and Illustrator, Joost Korngold has more than a passing interest in 3D apps like 3ds Max. While his Web design work is fantastic, we felt that this image best portrayed the genius present in Joost's images. Joost says that the engineering models were created in Pro/Engineer, then exported to STL format and pulled into 3ds Max, whereupon he weaved his magic to create this image.

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Home account at a glance

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